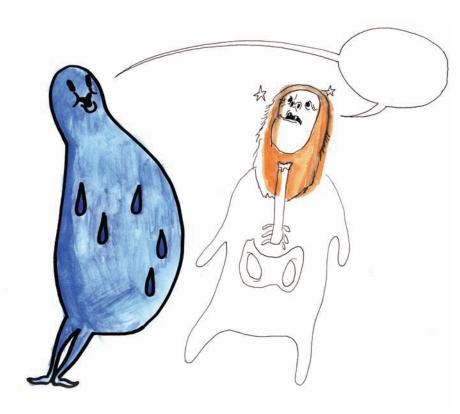
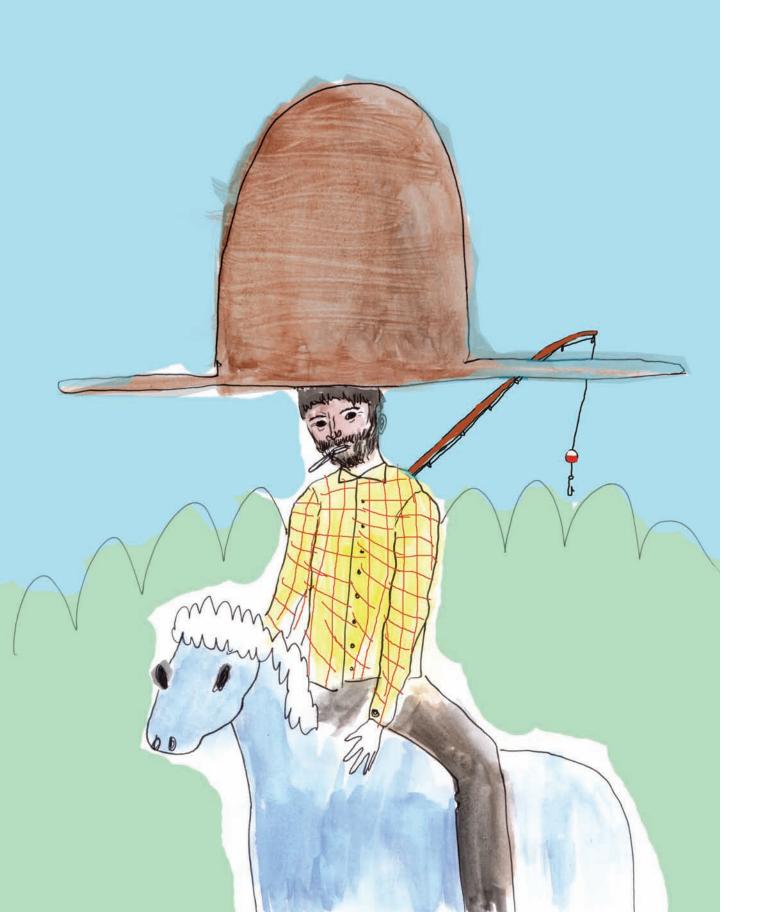


4 Passages

by Josh Malmuth Sarah Topol Andy Nelson Josh Tyson

w/ Artwork by Brennen Hill





BY JOSH MALMUTH

where they've lived since 1975. A Californian to the core, I have always been fascinated with the novelty of their basement—and, in particular, the small bathroom that my grandfather calls "the Fisherman's Potty."

in Chicago, just to, you know, get away for the weekend. My grandmother feeds me. I talk about fly-fishing with my grandfather. It's the kind of thing that would drive most kids my age out of their minds, but I love it; I've been coming here since I was a little kid. They've been married for 50 years and they still get does whatever my grandmother asks him to do.

It's her house really, and she keeps it squeaky clean. As children, my brothers and I were told not to touch the walls because they had just been painted. Fifteen years later, as I trudge up the stairs with my duffle bag, she calls out the same command, "Be careful of the walls!" Having been shooed out of every comfortable nook and cranny of his home, my grandfather holds fast like a pirate to his only remaining piece of property, the Fisherman's Potty.

"It's a closet slash bathroom slash thinking room," he says.

"What's a thinking room?" I ask.

He laughs a big, hoarse laugh. The old man wisely places most of his possessions in the Fisherman's Potty, and that is how it got its name. Two walls are packed floor to ceiling with fly-fishing equipment: rods disassembled into cardboard tubes, vests, flies, rubber boots and wading pants. A single 75-watt light bulb dangling from the ceiling provides dim, pulsing light that, in turn, casts weird, swaying shadows. The toilet sits dead center in the room and boasts the room's only luxury: a toilet seat with a faux-pearl finish.

My grandfather likes to say that my grandmother has tried to redecorate the Fisherman's Potty and move his stuff. He seems especially proud that he's been able to combat her attacks and successfully slice

y grandparents have a house in St. Louis out a little bit of space for himself: no candles or archived copies of The New Yorker, just fishing stuff and a toilet with a faux-pearl seat.

"It's a nice little bit of space," he says.

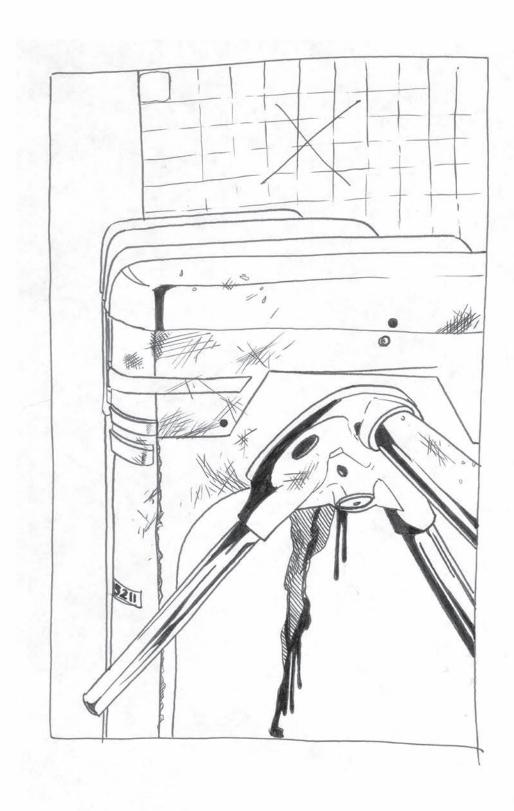
I was down there last spring and for the first time my grandfather's hat, sitting up on the top shelf of Lately I've been visiting St. Louis from my school a storage unit, caught my eye. It's a tan cowboy hat with a narrow brim and a band made of horsehair. I don't think it would be all that impressive brand-new, but beaten and worn as it is, drooping and dented in all the right places, my grandfather's fishing hat is the closest thing I've ever seen to a real cowboy hat. I placed it carefully on my head, pulled down the brim, along famously, probably because my grandfather and hastily searched for a mirror. Since I was in the basement, the only reflective surface was an old, cracked compact nailed to the wall. I slouched down so I could properly examine the hat on my head. With my hair and beard as long and shaggy as they were, the hat made me look grizzled and weathered, a true adventurer: the philosopher cowboy.

> Worried that I might be seen, I quickly placed the hat back on its perch, left the Fisherman's Potty and ran up the wooden basement steps as if I were 12.

> I casually mentioned the hat to my grandfather, who, after taking a long look at me, said, "I bet you look damn good in it." I was embarrassed, really, but couldn't help picturing the handsome silhouette I'd strike, on horseback and backlit, a hand-rolled cigarette dangling from my sun-chapped lips. Without the hat, I'm afraid of just about every drug-including tobacco-and use Blistex DCT three to four times every hour.

> After dinner my grandfather excused himself with a mischievous grin on his face. To my surprise, he returned with the cowboy hat from the Fisherman's Potty and presented it to the guests. The beat-up hat received exclamations of praise from everyone. My grandpa beamed proudly and said, "It's a five-X Beaver hat."

Now to me this sounded like a particularly **CONTINUED ON PAGE 12**



BY SARAH TOPOL

feel a tap on my shoulder.

"Miss, step over here please." A man with a A hideously stereotypical French accent is standing at my side. I pause.

walk through the Parisian metro station.

"Miss," he says, pulling something out for me to see. "I am the police, please, follow me." It's a badge.

I am caught.

I don't know what to do. I follow him to a table.

It all started so simply. From Brussels we boarded a train for our day trip to Paris. When we arrived, excited to be in the romantic city we had only seen in movies, everything went satirically wrong. We realized upon paying to use the train station bathroom that we had lost a friend. No idea where she was, she had just split. Confused, we searched the station for her, and then left, hoping she would be on the departing train we had bought tickets for so goddamn early that morning we didn't remember where we'd put them.

We had obviously not been thinking. It was Easter Sunday, the worst day to visit a city full of museums. Surely they would still be open, we reasoned. After pushing through the throngs of people lined up inside Notre-Dame we caught a glimpse of the Easter service, but we suffocated in the incense-filled air and left. We decided to stake out the Louvre. After walking around for a while, we finally found it. It was closed. An American couple standing outside looking similarly dejected told us that the modern art museum was closed as well, so we decided to use the last of our money on one of those hideous double-decker buses which would show us all the gaudy-tourist-trap sites we had actually come to see, but refused to admit to looking forward to. We paid the over-priced fee and scrambled onto the top deck, where we sat, patiently,

waiting to be shown the highlights of French history and Parisian culture.

We'd come to Europe with a group of seven friends. While there, we became a swarm of obnoxious Ameri-"No," I say, averting my eyes and continuing to cans, terrorizing the streets of Amsterdam, Brussels, Bruges and Ghent, looking for the hippest bars, complaining loudly about the exchange rates, and running wildly through small European towns looking for places to eat at three in the morning after a night out. We had been robbed in Amsterdam, money taken out from our backpacks while we were out of the room. Tricky Dutch, leaving some cash in our carefully-crafted hiding places so that we wouldn't realize any money was missing until we left the dinky hotel. We were too afraid to call home to get more money wired because we didn't want to admit we had broken the first cardinal rule of traveling: leaving our passports and money in our rooms instead of carrying them around in the travel belt we were advised to buy before our departure.

Three of our company had decided not to take the tour and we agreed to meet at the Eiffel Tower a few hours later where, the driver assured us, we would be dropped off at the end of the tour. We were on the roaring bus, my hands shaking with the effort of holding my manual camera steady to take photographs. A sign from fate: it started to drizzle, then downpour. At first we tried to sit out the rain, but we ended up in the bottom level of the bus, drenched, smelling the sweet smell of body of which odor we Americans always accuse the French, without really believing it existed. It smelled like a sewage pipe and we thought we would suffocate.

Finally the rain, merciless for a good 20 minutes, abated. We clamored to the top of the bus again, glad to breathe anything but the stench of humanity. We inhaled. Suddenly, with the Eiffel Tower visible in

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BY ANDY NELSON

Two scions of journalistic ethics have written that there are two kinds of media outlets: the naked man and the man playing a guitar. The naked man is sensational, attracting many people for a few moments. The guitarist builds his audience over time and learns new tunes as he goes.

naked man was George W. Bush.

Some background: If there is any publication that manages to play a good tune in the buff, it's The Onion. For the handful of you who haven't heard of it, The Onion is a weekly satirical newspaper. Print editions can be found in cities like New York and Chicago, but many people are also introduced to "America's Finest News Source" via the internet. As a result, its audience is a web-savvy crowd. That's why I knew they would get the joke.

It started out as The Onion's joke, of course. One week in August, their main headline was "CIA Asks Bush To Discontinue Blog," which ran alongside a photo of a bespectacled Bush leaning over an iMac (it's hard to see how The Onion could exist without Photoshop). What followed was an amusing "exposé" on how the president was leaking military plans and nuclear codes through his site on TypePad, which he had only meant for "friends and family." The site was listed as http://prezgeorgew.typepad.com. Like any good netizen, I checked to see if it was taken. To my surprise, it was not.

To me, the decision to buy the site was a no-brainer. I grew up in the URL speculation madness of the '90s; I knew what a good string of letters and periods was (briefly) worth. I figured the least I could get was some publicity, so I posted a paragraph explaining that I'd bought the site as a joke, then included my e-mail and a link to my real blog. A few hours later I was pleased to find a handful of comments, mostly to the effect of "great idea, good luck."

It wasn't until that evening that I discovered how to check the traffic on the site. I don't remember the exact figure, but it was in the thousands, with more than 200 people visiting the site each hour. The next day, when the print edition of The Onion came out, the site's total hits jumped above 10,000. I had thought my prank would just elicit a laugh from a few fellow geeks. There must be a lot of us out there.

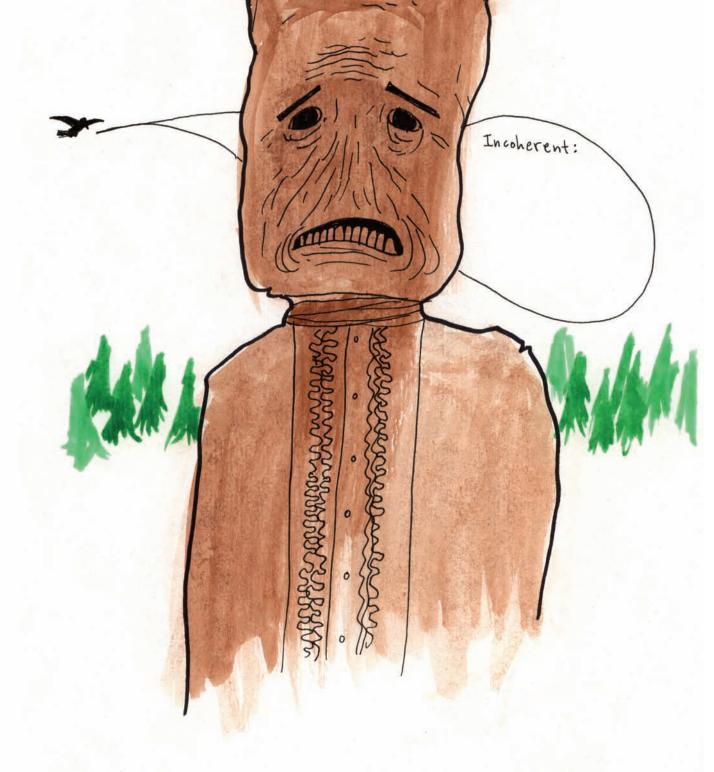
Unsure of what to do, I called my friend Graham (full disclosure: Graham publishes this magazine. He's swell.) He had a business plan before I asked for one, reminding me of the need to provide content fast and keep it short and snappy. Not feeling particularly satirical that night, I made it a contest, asking site For about two weeks, I was the naked man, and the readers to send me potential Bush entries. I ended up combining a few of the best. It was a little long, a little inconsistent, but it made me chuckle, and that was good enough.

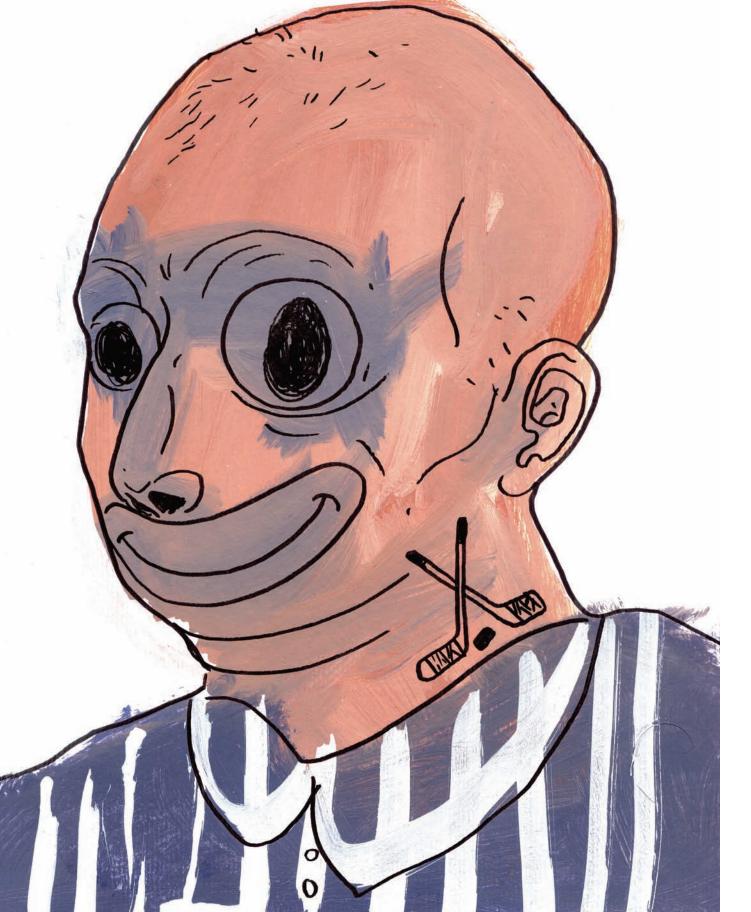
> Even now I'm not sure what I thought the site would accomplish. I was not so naive as to think it would change anyone's mind, and I'm not a diehard Democrat anyway. Some in the pundit class seemed to care, though; "George" was linked by such prominent sites as Daily Kos and the Guardian, and was discussed in comment sections on John Kerry's blog too. It was listed on Blogdex, which features "the most contagious information spreading through the weblog community," and BlogShares, a site that allows users to "invest" in new blogs in a virtual market (to remove the story even further from reality). Within a few days I had a peanut gallery of critics on LiveJournal and Blogger sites debating whether the site would stay funny or peter out.

> Even stranger were the comments and e-mails I received. Some people seemed unaware that the blog was fake, and filed their complaints to the Commander-in-Chief. Others carefully weighed whether The Onion was a reliable news source. One "FBI agent" threatened to have me arrested for "impersonating the President." Yeah, me and Will Ferrell.

> Most amusing, though, were the people who decided to get in on the act themselves. The site received comments from a host of mock-VIPs, from members of the Bush family to John McCain and Tony Blair to Britney Spears (apparently she's a fan). I was also referred to the "blogs" of Korean dictator Kim Jong Il and Australian Prime Minister John Howard.

> Site traffic and submissions remained steady for about a week. The Google Ads I put up made me about a dollar a day, which at least paid for the site. But each update left me less enthusiastic. Maybe it was the sheer stupidity of the people who took it seriously. Maybe it was my conviction that the best sati-**CONTINUED ON PAGE 14**





BY JOSH TYSON

early eight years ago now, Charlie Parker and both looked down at his bleeding shins, sticking raw Dizzy Gillespie came creeping out over the weeded edges of the median and went soaring into the bracing morning air. They poured wraithlike through the shattered windshield of my friend's powder-blue '84 Subaru, which lay overturned in the dirt-basin. Its wheels were still spinning. Nearby, a family of four huddled, watching us, next to their pick-up truck, which was pulled to the side of the north-bound lanes. They may not have recognized the jazz giants by name, but the duo's boisterous chaos seized the lunatic moment at the jugular.

My head was a chugging rotary of booze and terror. I'd only been awake for 30 seconds, breaking from my slumber when we tilted to the pitch of the ravine. I yanked the steering wheel inward to no effect, and as the car rolled over, the windshield collapsed like hoarfrost, swallowing a violent blast of earth. The overturned auto came to rest quickly, as its chassis wedged itself into the ground. To my right, Joseph was just waking. His mouth made dry smacking sounds and he brought his hands to his eyes to clear the dust out.

down. As he popped his seatbelt free, and dropped toward the roof of his car, he squealed, "Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow, ow, ow..."

I could see that his shins were bleeding as he struggled to untangle himself from the shoulder strap. I freed myself from the driver's seat and fell to the grass and dirt. Rising to face the wreckage, I spit the dust from my mouth and wiped it from my eyes. The dying automobile seemed sentient and vulnerable. The moaning and crackling of its motor cried out in contrast to the jovial jazz music that was still pounding persistently through its stereo system. I swung open the passenger door and freed Joseph from the twisted seatbelt. He crawled from the car and stood up. We

out of his baggy shorts, then returned our stares to

"Are you okay?" I asked him.

"Yeah, I think so." He said, bending to wipe away the bits of safety glass that were stuck in his flesh and leg hair. "What the fuck did you do to my car?"

"I, uh, well, I fucking wrecked it." I offered blankly. "The stereo still works."

Joseph sat down a few feet away and gazed at his Subaru. I staggered over and sat down beside him.

"You killed my car."

"Yeah."

I heard police sirens approaching from a distance. I stared at the dead car's front wheels. They were still motoring on, post-mortem. As one track on the cursed CD came to a halt, and another round of beebop began its mad, ambivalent ascent, I began trying to wrap my mind around the hideously flawed thinking that was about to seal the course of my immediate future. I would eventually have to call my mother. In a word, fucked.

I pulled at a clump of weeds and began wishing it "What the fuck?" he asked, sensing we were upside were 10 hours ago, when Joseph was driving us north along the same stretch of Highway 85. The strip of black that binds Denver to cattle country in the north would have been under a smattering of stars, and the wheels of an operative powder-blue sedan would have been spinning against the cool asphalt, not grabbing at the morning air like the legs of a dying beetle.

> We had gotten a late start, not even arriving in Greeley until after midnight. Our friend Mac was the manager of one of the township's largest liquor stores—a nearly warehouse-sized building whose clientele was evenly divided amongst reckless college students, jilted ConAgra employees and malt-liquor swilling Indians with gold paint-huffing rings around their mouths.

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"That must have been a fortune Bob!"

"Nope, I got this hat just outside of Durango, Colo. My previous hat had blown right off my head and into the Frying Pan River. So I walked into this little hat shop around 5 p.m. and they told me that some fella had returned this hat at 4 p.m. and they'd sell it to me for \$57."

"That's the deal of a lifetime."

"Wow Bob, what a steal."

With a wink, he placed it on my head. I turned around to face the room. Someone gasped, someone fainted, and I pulled down the brim and screwed up my eyes and mouth into a steely, rustic expression. Whatcha lookin' at?

Man, I wanted that hat. I had been planning this trip across the country to take my car from Chicago to San Diego. My friend Jim was going to join me. We wanted to stop at some trails or rivers along the way, hike in a few miles and camp. Suddenly this hat had become a requisite accessory, like a pocketknife or a backpack. Just think of the credibility a hat like that

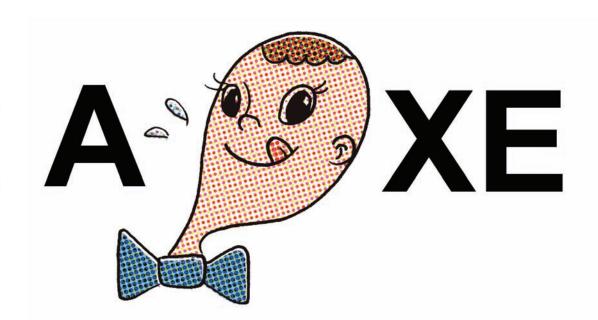
could give a green, suburban kid like me, tromping through the woods and high deserts of Basalt, Colo., and Bozeman, Mont. Even now, the romance of it is almost too much for me to bear. I could die in that hat I tell you, from a gunshot wound to the stomach, just die.

Wearing that hat means space. Not like outer space, but land and wilderness. You could do just about anything wearing a hat like that. No walk was too long or dangerous, no amount of alcohol or tobacco too much. Some poor five-X beaver gave his life so that I could bob along on a horse and be a different person—my lips would never be chapped again.

My grandfather must have seen the look in my eye because he quietly took the hat back down to the bathroom from whence it came. I suppose that hat means the same thing to him.

Incomprehensibly, my grandfather failed to offer me the hat when I was leaving for the airport. I like to think he planned to, but just forgot. Jim and I mapped out our trip the following week. After about an hour I convinced him to swing through southwest Colorado.

"But Josh, what the hell is in Durango?" I don't know, stuff. **1**



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

the distance, the bus stopped and people got off. We payed no notice, thinking it was just another drop-off point. We waited patiently for the bus to restart. We were the only people on the top, everyone else apparently found drenched seats unappealing. We waited for 20 minutes, clueless. We laughed and berated the French for their poorly-executed tour. Finally, the driver came to the top deck and stared at us. I asked him when we would be moving on to the final destination. He said, "This is it." We proceeded to get off the bus and walk the seeming mile to the tower, shaking our heads at the lies we had been told about the tour. Of course, it started to rain again.

Soaking wet for the second time that day, we arrived at the tower to meet our friends. Soon it would be time to board the train and head back to Brussels. We meandered around the tower for a little while, bought some crepes off a street vendor. It began to grow dark. We made our way to the Metro station. The line was long, and we didn't really have the money for the tickets anyway.

We decided on a plan.

We would all double up, three couples using three tickets—the tickets those who had thought ahead bought that morning. I walked through the turn style with my friend. Once through she walked one way, I walked the other. Pre-meditated, perfect, no, brilliant! We were the savvy travelers we read about, we were the embodiment of youth, living on the edge. I smiled, dizzy with my first law-breaking experience. No sweat, just like they told me when at first I protested the idea. This was just like I'd always read about. This trip, this day, suddenly, on adrenalin and food, felt much better. Screw the Dutch, screw Easter, screw the closed museums, screw it all! We faced disaster, and we won. We cheated Paris, which had tried so hard to cheat us!

I walk, briskly, happily toward the tunnel to the train. I feel the tap.

Caught, I am standing at his table.

"Miss, where is your ticket?" Shit. I didn't have the ticket. I followed my friend through.

"I dropped it," I say stupidly. "It's on the floor over there, if you look maybe you'll find it." The blood is rushing to my face. I'm not lying, surely plenty of people litter on the Metro.

"Miss, you are American?"

"Yes." Should have said no, should have said Canadian, everyone loves Canadians...

"May I see your passport please?" It's in my coat pocket, on the inside of my jacket.

"I don't have it. I left it in the hotel." Oh God, it's

burning a hole in my jacket; he can tell I'm lying. He has X-ray vision. I know it.

"Miss, give me your passport."

"I told you, I left it in my hotel. It's with my mother." Shouldn't have said that, what if they want to see her? She's in New York, she's nowhere near Paris. She's afraid to fly. My heart is suddenly connected to a loudspeaker, everyone is looking at me, everyone can tell. Do they kill people here for crimes? I wouldn't put it past them...

"Miss, you walked through without a ticket, we will take you to prison." PRISON? Surely, just a language barrier. I am dumbfounded.

"Jail?"

"No, prisón!" He says it so forcefully, so sure of himself, I am in shock. PRISÓN, PRISÓN, PRISÓN, FRENCH PRISÓN. The Bastille, the French revolution, the Jacobins, beheading, I'm going to die, for sure, maybe someone will storm it, liberate me. America how far away you are. Don't lose your head now, Sarah, or you will surely lose it later. Stay calm.

"I told you I don't have my passport, I dropped my ticket. You don't have any proof I walked through with anyone else!" My feigning disdainful indifference is transparent. I am guilty. I am caught. Surely, soon, I will be dead.

He takes out handcuffs. They are silver, shiny, gleaming, waiting to eat my wrists, to capture me, imprison me. He is staring at me, the handcuffs are gleaming directly in view. They hunger for my wrists. I think he has a gun.

"What can I do?" I admit defeat. I see myself, handcuffed, being led through the station, taken to prison... I am going to die. What am I going to do?

He looks at me, surveying my clothing, head to toe. "You can pay me 40 Euros," he says slowly, eyeing me carefully.

The game is up! I am not dead. I can bribe! Money will save me! I am saved!

I don't have any money.

Oh God. I have 20 euros, I don't even have 40, and I have to eat. I'm going to die either way, of hunger or in prison. I pick prison; at least there they will feed me. Or will they?

"I'm sorry sir, I do not have any money." I am honest for the first time. He does not believe me.

He smiles.

"No money, then prison." He is gleeful, he is salivating. He will probably be the one to kill me. Why oh why did I break the law? If he doesn't kill me, my mother will for sure.

He is opening the hand cuffs, gesturing for my wrists. I hear a voice.

PASSAGE

Mercy calls, I forgot all about my friends. They seem to be speaking to him, but I am not listening. I am entranced by the handcuffs. Maybe I will be on the news? My mother is going to kill me. I will never start college. I will die in a French PRISON. My time has

The Bastille,

the French Revolution, the Jacobins, I'm oing

finally come. Come and get me, handcuffs! I'm ready for you. My wrists are itching.

Suddenly I look up, trance broken. Everyone is tossing in money, and the cop has 40 euros in his hand. He is putting the handcuffs back and is writing me a ticket. A ticket describing my fine, for me to show anyone else who may stop me on this trip for not paying. (There are more undercover cops? Just waiting? Barbarians!)

My friends had lost me, meeting on the platform as per the not-so-brilliant plan. Wondering where I was, they walked back and found me facing handcuffs. Why hadn't I thought of it before? I wasn't facing prison, not really, but that's not what I tell people when we come back. I am a star, I was arrested in Paris. (It's better if I don't say what I was arrested for, or looks of admiration turn into smirks.) Till this day I keep the ticket in my wallet.

The rest of our trip went as planned; the friend we lost met us at the train. It turned out that the modern art museum was open on Easter, she had gone, and brought us some postcards. We went back to Brussels, got to our hotel, and collapsed in exhausted laughter. The rain, the bus, the arrest, the starvation, the closed museums, welcome to Europe IOI: we tried, we failed, we had a great time. We all want to go back, this time with traveler's checks, on weekdays, and with enough money to eat and buy our own Metro passes. •

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

rists always make jokes at their own expense. Maybe it was the lingering fear that I was somehow furthering the political polarization of America. Maybe I was

Whatever the reason, I decided to cede control to one of the principal writers and be done with it. Soon he lost interest, and I killed the site because I didn't want to keep paying for it. The decisive moment came when a friend jokingly asked, "What if this is your 15 minutes?"

The internet had made Andy Warhol's 15 minutes into 15 megabytes—the home video of "Star Wars kid," the flash animation that taught us all to ask "WTF, mate?" or the unfortunate blog of Jessica Cutler, the intern who documented her affairs with various Washington bigwigs. Fifteen minutes? "Great," I remember thinking. "Me and Janet Jackson's breast." For a couple of days, I was the latest winner of the publicity lotto-and I wanted out.

I think that was why the blog experience had started to scare me: I had become the naked man. What if more people read "George's Blog" than any publication I've ever worked for? Is this what I really wanted to be known for? Sure, I got a little attention out of it, a little fun, but in the end it was only a riff off The Onion's riff off the president. Just because it was a loud riff didn't make it any good. I believe that in any

Fifteen minutes? Great, me and Janet Jackson's breast.

endeavor-politics, art, comedy, whatever-we have to develop new ideas in order to get anywhere. "George" didn't help me do that, and he didn't help his readers do that, so he had to go.

Maybe I gave up on my 15 minutes—but that's time I can use to discover my real political convictions, to write an essay or a poem, to read a long-forgotten novel, to learn to play guitar.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

At his house, he kept a fully stocked refrigerator. Very little food; mostly condiments and a honeycomb of forties. He had also replaced a dresser drawer's contents with half-pints of every type of hard alcohol. He showed me his stash with a winsome grin and a slight giggle. It was going to be that kind of night.

Our late arrival steeped the impending bender in a completely unnecessary level of urgency. Once we'd adequately ratcheted our spirits, we tore across the University of Northern Colorado's slumbering campus with backpacks full of beer. Mac's roommate, Hank, was a drama student, so he suggested we break into the theatre department and do some more drinking on the main stage. We disabled the lock with a pocketknife and charged through the doors. The stage was ours, then the catwalks high above. On our way out, we tipped an unlucky vending machine until it dropped its wares. Finally, stumbling home, we saw a stop sign.

It took all four of us to tear the metal post out of the ground. Carrying the thing back to Mac and Hank's house over our heads, like a saber-tooth carcass, we crystallized a truly savage and infantile night of selfindulgence. The irony was surely lost on us.

We brought our fresh kill right into the living room. A third roommate, Lou, was asleep on the couch, and we rallied over him with the sign. It rained bits of dirt in his face, but he continued sleeping. We a forty. I heard birds. Then nothing much at all.

Sometime later, I woke up on the bathroom floor. Soft, young sunlight pushed through the blinds, and as I lifted my head off of the tiles, I could hear more birds chirping. There was a cordless phone on my chest that I didn't remember using. I heard thumping and muted voices coming from the roof. Lurching my way into the backyard, I found a ladder leaned against the house. When I got to the top, I saw Joseph, Mac, Hank and Lou passing around a bottle of vodka.

No one spoke. Hank and Joseph were sitting in lawn chairs, smoking and staring into the distance. Lou and Mac were lying on their backs. I staggered over and sat on the tar shingle roof. I motioned to Hank for a cigarette and he handed me his pack. I began smoking, watching the sky grow brighter. I exhaled some smoke and took in a lungful of the city's acrid air. The meatpacking plant on the outskirts of town produces one of the most distinct and nauseating smells in world. Local legend has it that twice a week they boil all the innards he is not one of them. Above and beyond statistics, in blood—the frequent explanation for fertilizer tang. People who live in Greeley have to actually concentrate on smelling it. It's invisible to them. That morning,

the flaming guts were crowding out the oxygen.

"Joseph," I said. "We should go."

"Yeah. Okay."

Instead of taking the ladder, we all jumped off of the roof into the front lawn.

"Are you sure you guys don't want to sleep here?" Mac asked, hobbling toward the house.

"No. I slept some on the bathroom floor," I said.

"I'm not fucking driving," Joseph slurred.

"I slept," I said. "I'll drive."

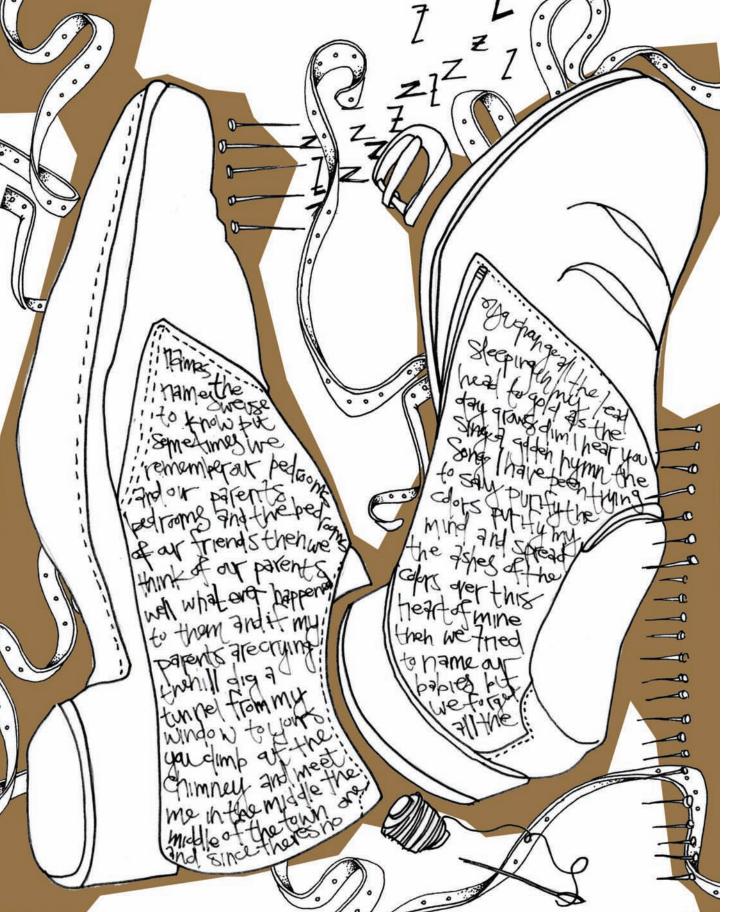
Joseph threw me his keys and we got into the powder-blue Subaru. Looking though his CD wallet, I removed Bird and Dizzy; Dizzy and Bird, reasoning that the buoyant jazz would keep me alert and ensure safe passage to Denver. We made it well out of Greeley without incident. As we raced down one of the few tributaries through the endless sprawling cattle ranches, I began to fade. I broke from my first nod and we were off of the left shoulder. The sound of loose dirt and torn weeds slapping the underside of the car woke me. Startled, I swerved the car back into a lane, but playing the stoic asshole, I did not pull over. It was the second nap that got us. I wonder if I was dreaming of being home. Of eating a solid breakfast and then sleeping for another seven hours. It's impossible to say how long we raced blind down the highway. A largely straight piece of road and a well-aligned vehicle could have kept us in check for maybe half a mile. Regardless, I can only imagine the cars I could have run from put the sign on the corner of the room, and I opened the road; the telephone poles that might have ended us; the families-like the one that watched our slovenly roll-over and then pulled over to see if we were all right—that I might have killed.

I threw bits of earth aimlessly as the sirens approached, trying to formulate an explanation. Foolishly thinking that since it was early in the morning the police might not suspect that I was drunk, I came up with a fractured story about a stray dog darting in front of the car. Within minutes, I was handcuffed and in the back of a police car. Convinced that the police had failed to read me my rights, I was sure I would be able to get out of any real trouble. Luckily, that was not the case. The book was thrown my way, and rightly so.

S S S

Sometimes it's hard even to fathom the careless, arrogant dipshit that got booked later that day. The same one that cried on the phone to his mother while a cellmate snickered in the background. I secretly hope I don't know him anymore. He was a slack fucker. Of that typified suburban ilk, that somehow believes that consequences and recourse. Beyond law and folly. I hope I don't know him anymore, but his memory still wields an acute terror.

PASSAGE



BY KYLE SMITH

concept album is a dicey thing. Popularized during the '70s and '80s by progressive rock Labands like Pink Floyd and Queensrÿche, the concept album consists of a series of pop songs consciously linked to provide a narrative or vague thematic consistency.

ARTWORK BY NICK KIRIPOLSKY

Recently, a number of modern artists have revisited the concept album, and thankfully they've rejected much of the theatricality of the past. Everyone's getting in on the concept album, from Green Day, with their self-proclaimed rock opera American Idiot to British rapper Mike Skinner's The Streets' boy-meetsgirl diary A Grand Don't Come For Free to the Flaming Lips' fantastic futuristic parable Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots.

The Arcade Fire's Funeral, released this past September, is, in many ways, a return to the ambiguity of the classic prog-rock concept album, but it discards a narrative in favor of building an environment through repeating images and themes. A good place to begin is the rousing "Rebellion (Lies)," the among them the Butlers' grandfather, the famed pedalbum's climactic song.

"Rebellion's" lyrics are obtuse but purposeful; taken as fragments, they become maxims ("Sleeping is giving in, no matter what the time is," "People say that your dreams are the only things that save you") as well as lyrics that don't make sense, coming off as absurd playground rejoinders ("People say that you'll die faster than without water").

The song's real feat, however, is rendering the passive act of sleeping into something both terribly sad and terribly triumphant. "Rebellion's" impulsive, pounding, almost schizophrenic piano chords evoke the maddening anxiety of sleeplessness, but the song's climax—chugging, layered guitars; ascending strings;

front man Win Butler's emotive wail of "Every time you close your eyes!" and the subsequent shouted refrain of "Lies! Lies!" preceding the heart-rending cooing of Butler's wife Regine Chassagne-creates about the most chill-inducing 90 seconds of music I've ever heard. It's a mournful dirge that would also work in a Rocky movie.

And beyond the visceral pulse of the song, there's Butler's resolute optimism as he textually reworks the finality of "death" to the more user-friendly "sleep." The children that inhabit Funeral, particularly in songs like "Tunnels" and "Wake Up," might better understand death as somebody taking a long nap. This is the sort of innocence and emotion the Arcade Fire

In the weeks since Funeral dropped, the 24-yearold Butler unwittingly became the latest paragon on the indie rock scene. Funeral was born in the wake of a number of deaths close to the Arcade Fire camp, al steel master Alvino Rey; bandmate Richard Parry's aunt and Chassagne's grandmother. All occurred within a 10-month period.

These events influence the album in obvious ways. The liner notes list the names of the deceased, and the photo of the band shows them in their best black outfits, posing morbidly. The CD's release date, September 18, is even listed as if the CD were the hymnal for a Saturday service. There are repeated mentions of death and dying in the album's lyrics, but even that does little to explain the sadness of Chassagne's voice in the sweeping album closer "In the Back Seat": "My family tree's / Losing all its leaves."

The genuine pain afflicting The Arcade Fire struck

the indie rock community like the metallic bolt on Funeral's cover. The band appeared on the front page of The New York Times arts section just a few weeks after Funeral's release, continuing their stratospheric rise in popularity, critical and commercial success. The band has also done the requisite rigorous touring across the United States and Canada, where the band formed. They hope to have another album out by late 2005.

I met with the band's newest and youngest member, Will Butler, Win's younger brother. Will Butler is a 22-year-old Northwestern senior, studying poetry, fittingly enough, and he looks the part—slightly poofy hair drifting over his ears, plaid shirt, and slightly baggy cargo pants. He exudes an anxious modesty: he proclaims his own mediocrity and seems a bit nervous about appearing a braggart.

Will and Win grew up in The Woodlands, Texas, just north of Houston, though they both attended prep school in New Hampshire. Born to a musically gifted family, they both played instruments, but only started playing together when Win was in college and Will still in high school. Win graduated from McGill University in Montreal, where he met Chassagne and formed the first of countless variations on The Arcade Fire in 2003.

"It's sorta been I've played with my brother whenever I've been free, or whenever we've both been in the same...part," Will Butler says. "I play on about half the record. I play bass on a couple songs, and I play keyboards on a couple songs, and I play xylophone, percussion...

"I play bass on 'Wake Up,' and I wrote the main riff to 'Haiti,'" Will says. I ask Will if the Arcade Fire intended to make an album as suitable for lifting weights as it is for the typically focused and introspective listener, exemplified by the exultant structure of songs finishing. like "Wake Up" and "Rebellion."

"I mean, there was a specific effort. Like 'Wake Up,' we were like, let's do a balls out rock 'n' roll song. The drum beat is like 'Doom, doom cha! Doom, doom cha!" Butler says, offering up a drumming motion music." with his hands. "That song was sort of specifically, well, not an 'Up yours.' It's more like a 'Check this out, asshole."

"Wake Up," like the "Neighborhood" cycle of songs that dominates the first half of Funeral, is sung with Win Butler's pauses and hesitations. These songs, and indeed the entire album, recall the perspective of a young boy who has stayed up too late on a weeknight. Summers turn into dust, children wake up, climb out the chimney, and meet in the middle of town; the power goes off and people dance in the street. They're always doing whatever they can to stay awake.

With a band as diverse (both in locale and occupation) as The Arcade Fire, Butler's modesty embodies the band's approach to music and success. They may have a song called "Une année sans lumiere," ("One year without light") but the band calls it simply "the French song.'

Besides Butler's own assessment of the band's live show ("We're not very good"), he is unfazed by the hype surrounding his band. After an intense bidding war (intense, at least, by indie standards), the band signed with Chapel Hill, N.C.,-based behemoth Merge Records, founded by Mac McCaughan of the indie rock group Superchunk. When I ask Butler why they chose Merge, he neglects independent pomposity and even issues of money or creative control. The band just liked Merge because they put out good stuff. "Just 'cause Merge released the Magnetic Fields and Neutral Milk Hotel CD, we were like 'Oh, what a good label, they released the Magnetic Fields."

How about being a college student in a band that has sold more than 50,000 albums in less than two months? (By comparison, Death Cab for Cutie's last album has sold 225,000 units in over a year, and that's with the sizable popularity boost of being a central part of the hit television show "The O.C.") "Luckily I really like college," Will says, "or I'd be really infuriated right now, because I'd be getting my degree when I could be being a rock and roll star. Unfortunately I like getting my degree."

On buzz? "The buzz was always people just saying there was a buzz about the band, which I guess is what 'buzz' is," Butler says. "But it was never 'Oh, there's a buzz around The Arcade Fire'...but that's the first document in the series. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy. All it is, is, wait a minute—" Butler trails off without

"It's really exciting to make good music," he says later. "Who gives a crap how we go about making that good music, like who is the root of it or anything. It's just, 'Oh, I am contributing to making some amazing

What about the claims of bloggers and critics that Win Butler is a brilliant songwriter? "I'm hesitant," Will says after a long silence. After another long pause, he proposes a dark, poignant scenario that eerily aligns with Funeral's themes: "Will and Regine are definitely the main forces, but everyone in the band is a really accomplished musician. If everyone else died, he and Regine could continue the band, but if he and Regine died, the band probably wouldn't continue."

Will Butler's pessimistic outlook may reflect the weight of death on The Arcade Fire family, and confirm the more obvious critical assessment of Funeral:



It's about death. Nearly every song alludes to death: I've walked away utterly moved, entirely compelled to the cry of "Don't dry or lie up!" in "Laika"; "Kids are dyin' out in the snow" from "Power Out"; "It's not heaven I'm pining for, but there's some spirit I used to know" from "Kettles." But the morbidity of these lyrical messages is paired with The Arcade Fire's modesty, optimism, and fist-pumping song structures, making the album one of renewal. Butler doesn't want in as a more optimistic representation of death.

Funeral is most certainly about death. But what makes Funeral such an enduring album is its careful hopelessness, its seemingly calculated ambiguity. I've

listen to it again.

J38U3558

When the band played "Rebellion" during their November 21 show in Champaign, Ill., Will Butler walked to the center of the stage and laid down, limp, at Win's feet. As the song slowly built up, Will rose as if being roused from a deep slumber by Win's words. By lyrically—and sometimes physically—aligning death to talk about death in specifics, and so sleeping stands with the comfort of a long night's sleep, and then pairing these lyrics with songs as tear-jerking as they are hard-rocking, Funeral is an album as relevant to the bereaved as it is to the insomniac. The Arcade Fire have touched that rare nerve, one that affects us so listened to this thing dozens of times, and every time deeply, we create our own reasons for loving it. •

ARTS ARTS

BY RYAN BRADLEY ARTWORK BY MIGUEL JIRON RON THE ONLINE COLLEGE SOCIAL SCENE

We should have known better and barred the doors, battened the hatches, hid the children and said a prayer. But no. We invited it into our homes. Let it stay. Gave it space, a desk or even a room. Gave it our time, our money, our phone lines. Provided for it. Ogled it and praised it. Loved it for its size, its immeasurable size. Loved it with that American love for open spaces, the same love that led our great grandparents to cross plains, deserts and mountains—new territories and the unknown.

We should have seen it coming. We kick ourselves and wince. We fed it everything, this insatiable beast: credit card numbers, social security numbers, names of first pets and mother's maiden names. Christ, some of us learned sex from it, had sex on it, watched people having sex in ways we still do not understand. But we kept one thing forever hidden from it, until everything we'd given wasn't enough—and the internet took our face.

It was a gradual taking. Sites like Hotornot.com and UglyPeople.com allowed the especially cruel and invested among us to judge strangers, wondering all the while why they had volunteered for such abuse. We found pretty faces, ugly faces, photoshopped faces. Faces not of people with exotic names and bodies, but faces from our state, our county, city, school, dorm, class; low-resolution faces full of braces and pimples. Slowly, the sites began masquerading in purpose beyond procrastination. The middle-aged could find former classmates at the yearbook picture database Classmates.com. The lonely could find a date at AmericanSingles.com or LoveCompass.com or Lavalife.com or PlentyofFish.com or Datingpearl. com or, well, just about anywhere in the limitless cyber-universe full of faces and possibility. Low-resolution faces connected with low-resolution faces and somewhere along the way our bastions of education decided they'd have a go. MIT and Columbia tried their own inter-campus, face-based networking programs, and then Harvard tried the same.

Problem was, all initial attempts at networking came from administrators, squares, rubes that had lost touch with the student body long ago. The suits scratched their heads and slumped their academic shoulders and questioned the sanity of youth while a

streaker ran past their window. These face-sites didn't have what we wanted, didn't have the searching capabilities, didn't let us say what we wanted to say or find other people who were interested in cheese, Russian literature and Fela Kuti.

But Zuck! Zuck could do it. Zuck was our guy. Zuck was one of us and knew what we wanted. And Zuck could do it faster, better, sooner than the squares.

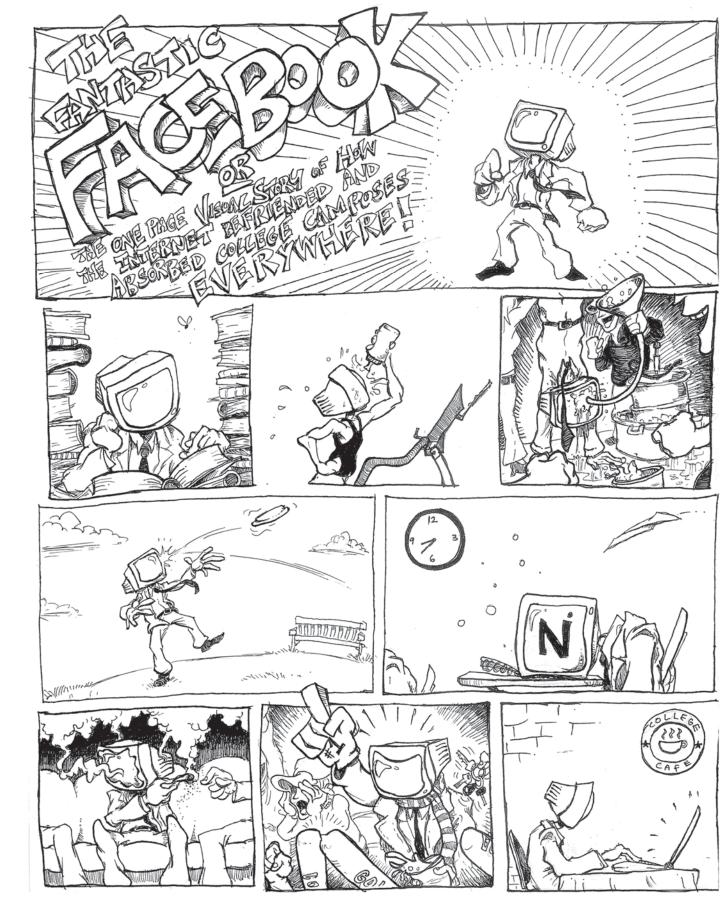
And Mark Zuckerberg did. He created Thefacebook.

"Harvard [administrators] were working on their own inter-campus networking program, but Zuck approached them and he said he'd do it in a week and he'd do it better—and he did," says Zuckerberg's friend and Thefacebook compatriot Dustin Moskovitz.

The audacity! Saying you'll do something better and faster and then doing it. Zuck had a knack for knowing what students would want, and he knew how to program the necessary features. He knew that college students want options—the option of self-expression, the option of listing our sexual leanings, the option of finding classmates, the option of making ourselves look more attractive and interesting than we actually are. Zuck and company gave us all of these things, and more—because Zuck knew that what we abhor above all is stagnation, and as long as Thefacebook kept growing and changing, we would be drawn to it.

And Thefacebook grew and grew, taking over the Harvard campus, the Ivy League, the private schools, the state schools, the East Coast, the West Coast, the Midwest, the South, the country.

And now the beast dwells in a small bungalow at the end of a cul-de-sac in Palo Alto, cared for by five kids not from the West but westerners nonetheless. Five kids busily staring into glowing screens, eyes red, wrangling bandwidth. I walked in the front door on an unseasonably warm September evening. The door was open and ignored. Half-finished chip bags, pizza boxes, bottles of Corona and Pacifica and empty bags of In-N-Out covered every bit of counter space around Zuck's Sony laptop. There was an electronic hum, barely audible, and the faint sound of crickets from the backyard. All five sat at tables, five different tables, each surface covered with its own unique assortment of excessive litter surrounding a computer. Zuckerburg, the founder, creator, and leader of the



outfit, looked up for a moment, then returned to his laptop and the programming jargon that flashed across the screen. Dustin Moskovitz, also supposed to be a junior at Harvard, also stopping out for a year, also 20, acknowledged me with a quick smile. Moskovitz had told me on the phone, a few hours earlier, to "keep an open mind" when I came to visit.

Moskovitz and I had been corresponding over email for months. They were a dodgy lot, these five kids slumped over keyboards and staring into glowing screens. I was happy to finally pin them down.

Wed Jun 23: Hi Ryan, I guess just give us a call when you're around. We're not planning to take any vacations during the summer, so you'll be able to meet with us for an hour or so. We are pretty busy though, so just make sure to contact us the day before.

Wed Jul 7: Yeah, sure. Well, maybe Friday wouldn't be best for us as we're planning on throwing a party. I guess you could go if you wanted, but we tend to run around getting stuff when we do that. Are you planning on staying around a few days?

Sun Aug 8: Hi Ryan, We're actually extremely busy this late in August. We've sort of entered crunch time. However, I think our normal press guy should be returning state-side relatively soon. You may have better luck trying to get in contact with him again (press@thefacebook.com) and arranging an interview that way. I apologize for the inconvenience, Dustin

Wed Aug II: Hi Ryan, I talked it over with Mark. I guess if you came the last week of August or early September (we stopped out, so not going back to Harvard...), you could chill for a while.

Fri Sep 3: Man, you're killing me Ryan. Can you make it to a party on Saturday? (during the day). Maybe Wed. or Thur. but next week will probably be the most intense week of thefacebook's existence (i know a reporters dream) so it may not be possible. I'll have to let you know sooner to the date.

It was the most intense week of Thefacebook's existence. The crew was busy releasing Thefacebook on college campuses, crunching in hours to make sure the release date corresponded to the beginning of the school year in early September. In the past week Thefacebook had opened on 41 new campuses, and had been wildly popular (in varying degrees of wild popularity) on each. Drawn on a whiteboard was a tournament-style bracket system that pitted the schools against each other in terms of Thefacebook popularity-Uconn vs. Rutgers, Irvine vs. Brandeis, UT vs. Vassar. At the time of my visit, Thefacebook had opened on more than 120 college campuses. Three months later, that number had grown to more than 200. At each of the 203 campuses-from American to Yale—the popularity is phenomenal, always over 60 percent. At Harvard, student-members make up well over 90 percent of the student body.

"It's always kind of a surprise which schools Thefacebook really takes off on," Moskovitz says.

He takes me through several new features, some recently released, some still being tested. He tells me how important it is, for them, to keep Thefacebook "built by college students, for college students." How it's a networking tool, a study tool; how, with a new calendar feature, Thefacebook makes our lives more organized and easier.

He pauses, again flashing a smile, "But most guys still just use it to look for chicks."

And will It ever stop? We search ourselves, our photos, others' photos-searching for reinvention, an opportunity to appear better, more interesting, more social, more than we really are. We question our friendships, our social networks. Hidden in our rooms, we secretly scan pages looking for more attractive, more interesting, more exotic faces. And can

One of the more fascinating new features Thefacebook offers is the creation of "groups." The groups feature allows a user to invite other users into his or her group, through which online message board discussion ensues. But it's also just a group. Which is to say that Thefacebook has, brilliantly, recreated the real life social scene online-complete with cliques and gossip, playing into all of our insecurities. Now we can be more attractive, have more friends, be in more groups then we ever were in high school. And isn't college about reinvention?

> There is a pool in Zuck's backyard, but the lights have burnt out from too many pool parties.

There are tiki torches, burnt out for the same reason. I look at the empty bag of In-N-Out next to the Cape Cod salt and vinegar chips next to the Corona next to the pizza box next to cases of blockbuster movies (Zoolander, Happy Gilmore) next to Zuckerburg's laptop next to Zuck and contemplate the life- site? Why don't they just cash out? Buy an island or style we have enabled them to lead. Our overwhelming desires, our collective insecurities, our wanting Thefacebook to be the all-encompassing collegiate phenomenon that it has become landed in between plies of chips and beer in a Palo Alto bungalow.

We could have seen it coming. Zuck had been on the techno-radar since high school, turning little programming projects into multi-million dollar ideas. There was the software he and a Phillips Exeter friend, Adam D'Angelo, came up with that tracked the listening habits of users on Winamp, an MP3 player program. D'Angelo, now a student at CalTech, works with Zuck and Moskovitz in Palo Alto. He and Zuck had offers in the millions for their program from the likes of Microsoft and America Online, but they sat on it and by the time they were ready to sell the offers had been dropped.

And then there was Facemash. A short-lived, much controversial site in the vein of Hotornot.com that pitted two Harvard faces against each other and allowed users to vote on which was the more attractive. The site was taken down, amidst public outcry, in less than a week. There was its predecessor, Coursemash, a program that allowed students to network with people enrolled in the same classes.

Zuck himself was an indication of things to come. A kid who, friends say, gets so absorbed in his little ideas that he forgets to eat or sleep and rarely leaves his slouched, edge-of-seat position in front of his laptop until his little idea is manifested or dropped. Most are dropped, or passed around through his group of funny part of college? Wasn't it silly how much time friends and never released to the public.

A kid who, in an interview with the Harvard Crimson, said of his little facebook idea:

"I do stuff like this all the time. Thefacebook literally took me a week to make."

A kid who's too low-key to appear arrogant and arrogant enough to appear genius.

Zuck was quiet, almost nervous in my presence. He joked about how every college publication does at least one story on Thefacebook. How I'm not with Time, but hey, it's press. How, um guys, do you want to take this picture? How he doesn't really have time to talk now, or tomorrow, or in the next few days or weeks. How they do get paid a marginal amount, like all software engineers, but couldn't disclose how much and wouldn't let me photograph his newest scheme, scribbled on a large whiteboard, standing on end near his table of trash and his laptop. Everything in the bungalow is near a table and trash and a laptop.

I asked them why. What makes them work seven-, eight-hour days for a little cash from the ads on the something?

"I don't know," Moskovitz says, "what kept us going through all this Zuck?"

"Your mom."

"No, she wasn't a part of this yet."

But, really, the bungalow could be filled with bottles of Cristal, not Corona. These kids could be living like rockstars, not hunched and red-eyed and weary. Forget the pay, forget the pool and the culde-sac and the mild climate. Why are they still there, working to bring Thefacebook to every damn college kid in the nation?

"I think...well, I mean, everyone on Harvard's campus knows Zuck by name. I think he's kind of into that," Moskovitz says.

Milan Kundera, in his novel Immortality, speaks not of a religious immortality of the soul, but of a different, earthly immortality. A kind everyone can achieve in his or her own life. "Greater immortality," Kundera writes, "means the memory of a person in the minds of people who never knew him personally."

And there it is, plainly spelled out on the bottom of our screens-thousands of screens, everyone's screen-

a Mark Zuckerberg production Thefacebook © 2005

And when the empty boxes of chicken nuggets, the half-eaten candy bars and the squalor of a pool without lights fades away, what we will remember in 10, 20, 30 years is Thefacebook. And wasn't that a we spent on it? Wasn't it strange that I name dropped and networked and cared so much about something so intangible? And maybe, just maybe, we'll remember Zuck. Not so much the name, really, but the idea of Zuck. A kid, like us, whose little idea took off and took over. And maybe, just maybe, we'll tell our kids about It.

I left soon after snapping some photos and trying in vain to pry more team members away from their glowing computer screens. Zuck, nervous still, asked that I take a picture that didn't show any of the beer bottles, as he and Moskovitz are underage. They quickly jumped on the couch and joked around—posing for a mock embrace. When I was finished the pair returned to their computers. Business as usual. I checked my watch. 10:53 p.m. Still unseasonably warm. Thefacebook guys showed no signs of stopping.

As I got up to leave, Zuck and Moskovitz gave nods of acknowledgement—Moskovitz threw up an arm. Not stopping, not looking away from the glowing screens. Each carving out their own piece of immortality. 10



Det·rix: n. digital recombinant art notable for a lack of cohesiveness, beauty, or purpose. Available with or without Pee Wee Herman. (roots: Detritus, Pixel, Tetris, Kid Pix, D-day)

Crude gets Cool

elcome, noobs, to Detrix IOI. Today's class takes us to a small bedroom, lit only by LED and possibly black light. Between the empty Pringles cans and bong water stains on the carpet (extra credit for correctly identifying two out of three mystery odors), black neonate Ethernet cables slither along the ground, their fiber-optic veins pumping distraction at IOO MB/s.

Now, class, multiply this room by the number of bored, URL-shopping cats per square mile. Then add pirated Flash animation software and figure in a few hundred espresso shots. The resultant computer brainpower? More than that of Industrial Light and Magic, Microsoft Corporation, and Google. Combined.

But no need to liquidate in your shorts just yet—

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it's not like this cognitive cache is going to any practical use.

Many great minds of our generation have found themselves not improving their standardized testing skills or applying for internships, but rather rummaging through their

overflowing Temporary Internet Files folder, hoping to (somewhat literally) find a flash of inspiration.

Lost? We're talking about the sources of Detrix, a neo-Dadaist computer animation form that has evolved from cult oddity to trendy new-media art style. With its defiant irrelevance and its members' proud exclusivity, Detrix started just like any other fledgling underground art movement. And if art history precedent is any indication, the snowballing digital recombinant art form may soon appear in a car commercial near you. The chaotic kinesthetic, the low-fi logic, the mercilessly silly syllogism—in other words, Detrix is ready to make a grand market entrance.

Irrational Exuberance: Growth of a Movement

efore understanding the future of Detrix, it is necessary to know its past—a short history in stonerdörk internet art is in order. In 2001 after the mainstream crossover success of Flash-programmed movie files, such as "All Your Base Belong to Us" and the baby dance (remember that one?), Neil Cicierega, a 13-year-old aspiring programmer from Kingston, Mass., decided that he too wanted an opportunity to gain fame through mass distraction. Not having a solid background in Flash multimedia programming or professional-grade software, however, Cicierega decided to throw together some spare images he found on his hard drive. The migraineinspiring result featured pixelated TV images and Pokemon gifs, their crudely bobbing jaws mangling Japanese lyrics while the Hamburgler

and Canadian comedian
Colin Mochrie floated
merrily across the
screen.

Soon labeled "animutation," the oft-imitated style that with Cicierega's "The Japanese Pokerap" eschewed the once-cardinal rule of the internet art community: the more professional and new-fangled looking, the better. Cicierega's self-described "impulsive junkpile" raged against that norm. Teenage Flash art amateurs, frustrated with the enormous time and energy required to make even the simplest movie files, jumped at the opportunity to leave professionalism for the suits. With no pretense of competency to slow them down, they could be as raunchy or random as their imaginations and image-acquiring skills allowed. Flash artist Ibombtrees eloquently described the phenomenon in a 2002 public forum comment: "I want my mom to see what I do and try flushing me down the toilet."

Within months of the release of "The Japanese Pokerap," a growing group of cult heroes appeared, donning digital avatar names like Spudnewt and Bunnyavenger. As Kid Pix-reared Flash artists began to form communities at websites such as Albino Black Sheep, files that showcased how skilled an animator could be at being unskilled began to proliferate. These files brought a new element to the medium: shock value. While esteemed professor Stephen Hawking mingled with a drawing of a testicle in "Weeeeeeeee! (Gonads and Strife)" and Princess Di's severed head frolicked with Jay the Jetplane singing airplane in "French Erotic Film or Colin Mochrie versus Jesus H. Christ," the browser hits kept increasing. Though responses to individual videos varied, the attention

span-damaging experience was met with extraordinary enthusiasm. Richard Wagner's "Gesamtkunstwerk" had finally arrived in 760KB.

Paul Bryan, a sophomore economics major at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., and residence hall computer chair, remembers his initial exposure to animutation. "I didn'tknowwhat it was called, but I had never seen anything like it

before," he says. "It showed absolutely no planning. And that, strangely enough, was exciting!"

Bryan, who became involved with the amateur Stickdeath animation site during the initial Detrix explosion, believes that Flash is the medium for a generation raised on shiny computer graphics. "Look at the popularity of South Park," he says. "I don't believe it's out of the question for a feature film to appear in the Flash format."

His enthusiasm is shared by the internet community. One artist commented on PigDog.com in 2001, "You can tell yourself that the baffling videos are a subtle, cheerful reminder that the internet really is a global community, more diverse than you could ever possibly imagine." With lyrics like "It's Princess Leia / The yodel of life / Give me my sweater back / or I'll play the guitar," there's little room for argument. After all, how can you disagree with total nonsense?

"Random is the New Order"

nimutation has had its share of spin-offs, such as short-lived fads like the endlessly repeating, literally one-second-long catchy videos known as Flash Loops with names like "Let's Get GIRtarded" and "Badgers (Badger, Mushroom, Snake!)." Websurfing drift has led to offshoot genres and movements. These files have ranged from the existential brillance of Clown Staples' "Windows Noises" (a musical compilation made entirely from Microsoft's stock sounds) to the quirky faux-mutation of "Samsung Means To Come" by Young-Hae Chang.

But one type of Detrix has remained conspicuously uncharted: the partisan Detrix file. Not to say that politicians aren't frequently subjects of the Detrix treatment; they get their dues just like everyone else.

But there are no Moveon.org animutation files, for example, no matter

are with the internet community.

Giving their pieces names like "Bagagaga Bop! (Bagadada)" and

how in touch Democrats think they

"DooDooCaca," the minds





madness in no way wish to appeal to self-important intelligentsia or participate in partisan bickering.

The absence of partisanship in such an accessible medium is not a mistake. There are no Flash files of Stephen Hawking asking audience members to register to vote—and if there were, the message would be lost in the absurdity of its surroundings.

And that is just the point.

These mostly teenage and college-aged animators, like their fiercely loyal audience, have realized that the mass media blitzes may be to expose the sheer silliness of it all. Mixing Japanese detergent jingles with familiar AP images of bombs dropping and dead celebrities is a way of critiquing without pointing fingers. Contrasting sharply with, say, the polemic techniques of the Michael Moores of the world, Flash animations are intense without having a hint of self-importance. They recognize that we are overloaded with images and sounds, that tend to merge together like all other things that enter our bodies, until all that remains is a sacred, profane multimedia catastrophe.

As the community of Detricists has grown and its underground status has been consequently threatened, the higher-ups—"weblords"—have taken action to fortify their insular community with a stiff learning curve and a patronizing attitude towards "newbie" animators. One Albino Black Sheep veteran posted a picture to the site in June depicting a "noob jail," complete with a rooftop guillotine. The forum has also posted an "Official noob Guide to NOT being a noob," which recommends not "pissing off the (moderators) like you would any other forum member, because they can and will burn your ass at the stake."

But as much as the kings and queens of Detrix try to keep their movement an intimate one, they're no match for the profit-driven forces of businesses hardpressed to stay relevant with youth. Ironically enough, these corporations are discovering that the last thing they need to stay hip is relevancy.

> Charlie Brown Lives in the Mall of America lready the corporate battering ram

has made some cracks. Last sum-Amer, a Sony-sponsored Detrix-

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esque Flash ad entitled "Come Dancing Wit Jah" appeared on the Albino Black Sheep website. Intended to promote the company's Net MD Walkmen, the file, in keeping with traditional Detrix style, features a crudely drawn elderly couple shaking their respective booties to a Jamaican dancehall soundtrack. In a recent Quiznos sandwich commercial, malformed mutant hamsters lead a conspicuously silly chorus of "we love the subs!"

Even more indicative is the strategy of the trendbest defense against corporate monopolization and hunting Nike group. In July, Flash animator Zhu Zhiqiang sued the corporation for a violation of intellectual property rights, alleging that its now defunct "Stickman" bears too strong a resemblance to his 'Little Match Man.' Zhigiang's "Xiao Xiao" animations are popular at sites like Detrix-hosting Albino Black Sheep.

> In September, Nike hired the creator of last year's popular "End of the World" file to make similar animations to promote its new line of thermal jackets. While a few bloggers have mocked the campaign as a lame attempt to co-opt the Detrix phenomenon, the strategy has appeared to pay off.

> As with other market adaptations of counter-culture, the desired effect is an appearance of disassociation with the corporate world. As if it were some beleaguered rock star, Nike appears to be implying that it's not a "sell out;" it's not associated with "the man." Corporate heedfulness is a sign of pop culture saturation, just like a rap song shoutout, or a fan club.

> "Of course (Detrix) is going to be adopted if it's popular with the youth," Bryan said. So is it unseemly to imagine music videos, TV shows, and even, as Bryan suggests, movies borrowing from the Detrix style of voyeurish amateurism? Akin to recurrent renaissance movements in painting, photography, music, and dance, use of retro graphics and impromptu arrangements at least allows for novelty.

Especially as computer graphics near the watershed moment of realistically mimicking human life, Detrix serves as a reminder that creative, self to be left in the wake of technological progress, serves as a reminder that creativity will not allow itspan of graphical age can erode. 🕡



Erica Gorochow The Passenger March 1, 2005

Random Review: The Five Paragraphs and You

Eighty-seven percent of pregnancies are unplanned. More shocking still, eighty-two percent of the population lives an utter lie, believing that they are genuinely "cherished" by Mom and Dad. In reality, the vast majority of parents cling to dreams of single life and harbor feelings of resentment albeit well disguised) Of course, whether the previous is or isn't total crap is beside the point. Instead, the purpose of this article is to review the subliminal tyranny of the "five-paragraph format," often publicly taught between the fifth and twelfth grades. This article will prove that this format is intrinsically linked with communism, racism and tax evasion.

This first paragraph will prove how the five-paragraph "style" is actually a remnant of the eastern bloc's communist regime. In the same way Lenin was able to slyly brainwash a nation into hating McDonalds and JCPenney, the five-paragraph-terror (as I like to call it) similarly works on the assumption that good writing is synamous with clear, organized thought process. Facts and figures rule supreme while recklessly pure emotion is kicked to the proverbial curb. The only thing these writing "lessons" instill is the dulling of man's instinct to feel. How can anyone be surprised that today's youth is a generation of TV-and video game-obsessed automatons?

This next paragraph will show that this style of writing is racist. It ignores other cultures' methods of organization. Case and point: Hebrew, among other languages, is read and written from left to right. The five-paragraph format rigidly insists on being deciphered in only one direction. I'm not naming names, but it doesn't take an expert in "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon" to realize this format is inherently anti-Semitic. As someone who dabbles in conspiracy theory, I've got to wonder where this "format's" political allegiances lieXIt's no surprise a reputable political analyst once loosely alluded to the teaching of the F.P.F as the most scathing war crime ever exercised. Frightened to go on the record, the reputable analyst said, to paraphrase, "[It's] like [poison gas], you can't smell or see [the terror], but it's there...[waiting to pounce] like an [endangered tiger cooped up in a west coast zoo]."

This last paragraph will demonstrate how the "frightening-five" promote a vicious cycle of alcoholism and unemployment. The evidence: after this method of writing is planted into unwitting students' minds, teachers are quick to discourage its use when corresponding state-administered tests have been completed. How are children supposed to rebuild trust with a teacher after having the rich tapestry of education maliciously ripped out from under their innocent feet? It's just a microcosm of the true "American" way: those in power will always have the power-to-take sadistic pleasure exercising what little authority they may or may not have. Can you blame students for opting out of this corrupt system early? One can't help but ask: if it weren't for this writing style, would the projects even exist?

In conclusion, I've shown that the five-paragraph format is inherently communist, racist and promotes welfare abuse. To take these thoughts a step further, perhaps this method of writing is part of a larger system that includes tricky spelling techniques, unwarranted grammar rules and nonsensical expressions like "The bee's knees" or "Money doesn't grow on trees." Lastly, I hope this article has given the wider population yet another reason to use multiple forms of birth control. If you're unlucky enough to be plagued with a child, protect him or her by opting to home school.

Clear, organized: makes your point effectively. Nice job bringing in larger issues in the opening and closing. Great! A

BY GRAHAM WEBSTER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOMAS LEE

oward Dean was about to take the stage. He had less than two hours to meet his fund-raising goal, or he would have to answer for it. It was August 2003, when Dean was leading the Democratic pack. The campaign had set out to raise a million dollars during a four-day, ten-city tour. New York was the last stop. With two hours to go, internet donors had sent in \$900,000. No one thought they could raise a hundred grand in 90 minutes, and Dean was faced with very public failure—in front of an already skeptical press-corps.

Weeks before, the campaign had wanted to show donors how they were doing, so someone proposed filling an online baseball bat gradually as money came in, like a thermometer at a church fundraiser. As the Dean team worried about the empty top of the bat someone

writing in from somewhere made a suggestion on the Dean blog: if the web world could gather the rest of the \$I million by the time he took the stage, Dean should carry a red bat and tell the blog people they'd done it.

"I thought it was brilliant," wrote Joe Trippi, Dean's technology-obsessed campaign manager, in his book *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*. "It would mean very little to the reporters and pundits, but those thousands of our supporters watching on C-SPAN, or watching streaming feeds on their computer screens would know the significance, the bat filled with red on the website and a red bat in the hands of the candidate."

Trippi sent a young campaign staffer on the absurd mission: it's past eight at night in Manhattan—go get a red bat to match the one on the website, and get it before Dean goes on at ten.

The web servers crashed. The 800 number bit the dust. Too many donations were coming in. The most robust online campaign machinery in history couldn't handle its own support. But it was too late to matter.

"A huge number stared at me from the screen," Trippi remembered. "\$1,003,620. I checked my watch. IO:00. I couldn't believe it. We were high-fiving and hugging and just then someone on the stage called out, 'Ladies and gentlemen, the next president of the United States...'"

The unfortunate staffer came running through the crowd, breathless. He launched the bat through the air at Dean, by then triumphantly mounting the stage. "You did it!"

If Trippi had had his way, that would have been the most famous scream of the campaign. It represented the real-time connection between in-person campaigners, conventional press, and thousands of individual acts online that made the campaign. Trippi says the campaign was near the beginning of a bottom-up revolution—an unstoppable international revolution of the political playing-field that will disrupt the entrenched game of money and special interests, leaving something like direct democracy in its wake. But this wasn't the scream that would define the campaign. When their new methods went up against the old in Iowa, Trippi's rowdy, idealistic operation hit a wall.

The Dean Campaign

nder Trippi's leadership, the Dean campaign was quite literally run by people under 30. When he joined Dean's staff a year before the Iowa caucuses, Trippi was working with a team of six. Within a few months, dozens of young people were heading to Burlington, Vt., to join the team. The press derisively called them "Deanie Babies," "the Dean Swarm," and "Deaniacs." In fact, many of these young people were the soul of the campaign: Sarah Buxton was Dean's 23-year-old scheduler; Gray Brooks, a 19-year-old college freshman from Alabama, took off on a road trip to join the campaign after hearing about Dean. Brooks introduced the governor the day he officially declared his candidacy. Mat Gross, who created Dean's candidate blog (the first such blog ever), was another who just showed up-in his case he was hired on the spot just as security was throwing him out because he wasn't on staff.

Trippi had a unique appreciation for the potential power of the internet in political organizations. He arrived in Burlington with the internet on his mind, after spending most of the 90s working for new-economy firms. He also had a long political history, starting as a campus rabble-rouser at San Jose State University. There he led a campaign that forced the university president to resign. Having spent the following





40 years working for underdog presidential candidates (none of the seven he worked for was elected), Trippi was finally at the helm, guiding a candidate in a way that combined his two loves: presidential politics and technology. It took someone like Trippi, who was fluent in the special languages of both politics and technology, to explain the young people and the old people to each other. When the young staffers wanted to decentralize control of the campaign into the internet community, it took someone like Trippi to convince the veterans.

"The reality is that you don't need to wait for some knight in shining armor to get on a white horse and ride into Washington and change the country," Trippi told me in July of 2004, trying to minimize his role. "I think the way it's going to change is two or three or four million Americans realizing, 'We have the power to change things.' And I think this younger generation has figured that out. They've also figured out how to organize themselves, and they've also figured out that if they band together with people in the baby boom generation who want change, that they can make it."

While Trippi played referee between young, idealistic, innovative volunteers and seasoned political operatives, it was his mixed background—working for presidential candidates since Ted Kennedy and obsessed with the internet since it was a Defense Department pipe dream—that made Trippi the missing link. It was political heresy to publish a fundraising goal, even in the form of the now-iconic red bat. Trippi

was able to take a good idea from the web people and explain its worth to the governor's more traditional advisors, and to a sometimes-skeptical Dean. He says he never understood why some older liberals resisted new ideas from idealistic young staffers.

"What I find amazing is that the parents who were baby boomers, who had long hair... Most of them were called hippies or freaks. When they were 22, 23 years old, the establishment warred against them and tried to snuff out their idealism," Trippi says. "They're the ones that are in power now, and what are they doing? ... It's like baby boomers think they were the only generation that had a right to try and change things.'

As Dean's campaign manager, Trippi was in a position to facilitate the empowerment of another generation of rabble-rousers. But like every presidential candidate Trippi ever worked for, Howard Dean rode into the ground well short of the White House. They hadn't started with much: a no-name governor from a tiny state, a man whose entire poorly-funded campaign staff had been eight people when the competition had small armies, a man with the dangerous habit of speaking his mind in public. Dean had never expected to be a frontrunner, and he sure as hell wasn't ready to stand up to constant attacks from other candidates, traditional media, and Republicans.

It wasn't just the evil media or dirty politics that took Dean down, though. The campaign was an experiment, constantly making breakthroughs and equally

innovative mistakes. It was an organization led by people without a master plan. Trippi rarely slept, and his health suffered. A diabetic, he was in serious jeopardy of physical collapse through the entire ordeal, and he had a short fuse and a reputation for screaming at the same idealistic staffers he defended to the skeptics. By the time Al Gore endorsed Dean, Trippi says he knew they were going down. He'd expected to be going home long before that, but by the "I Have a Scream" speech in Iowa, everybody had forgotten how absurd it was that Dean had made it that far.

Trippi was full of optimism when I interviewed him for student radio in late July of 2004. Dean was longgone, and far from his reemergence as chair of the Democratic National Committee. Trippi had written and published a book since the campaign fell apart. He thought that the Dean campaign had set something unstoppable in motion, even if 2004 wasn't the year.

"Dean was the focus of all that energy," Trippi told me. "The energy's still there... I mean it's sort of dispersed into a thousand different sites that have their own community or are building it."

In hindsight, it's easy to see how Dean's internet community couldn't be transferred to the Kerry campaign. The thousands of independent bloggers and campaigners hitting the streets and the web to help Dean had been linked through a few central nexuses. The Dean website was an obvious one. The iconic liberal blog DailyKos was another. But after Dean, some activists just quit. Others fought on, trying to do for Kerry what the web had done for Dean. But the Kerry campaign didn't have a Joe Trippi. Even after they hired know if it's 2006 or 2008, but I fervently believe Zack Exley, the MoveOn.org operative who had helped the Dean campaign with its web ideas, to run their online operations, the Kerry camp was more centralized, and wrested control from the forces "out there."

In July, Trippi saw this coming. "There's so much creativity in this generation, and the tools that they have are so powerful, that they're the ones that are going to help us change this system. It's not going to be some of the Kerry's of the world," he told me. "It's not Kerry's fault he's been living in the system as it is for so long. We were just lucky."

Or were they? Trippi's free-spirit campaign selfdestructed, and there's no reason to believe that a decentralized, web-driven campaign would have worked any better for Kerry than it did for Dean.

After the Dean Bubble Burst

fter the late-90s dot-com bubble burst, new economy thinking went back on the shelf. It later, a whole new cadre of speculators is chomping time had not yet come for real change. 10

at the nervous bit to turn a profit after Google successfully went public. For online activists, Dean For America was its own speculative bubble. Thousands thought 2004 was the time to revolutionize politics in America, and when Dean crashed in Iowa, Democrats retreated to tried-and-true TV-age strategies. Perhaps online politics will get a Google-style revival in 2008.

Grassroots activists regressed to TV-age tactics right along with the politicians. Since 1968, when Yippies, peaceniks and general freaks made a scene outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, political street theater has been for the benefit of television cameras. For the first time, a political party was exposed in chaos, live on television. And that year, just barely, Richard Nixon beat the conflicted Democrats. But as websites begin to erode television's media dominance, the efficacy of street protests is more uncertain than ever.

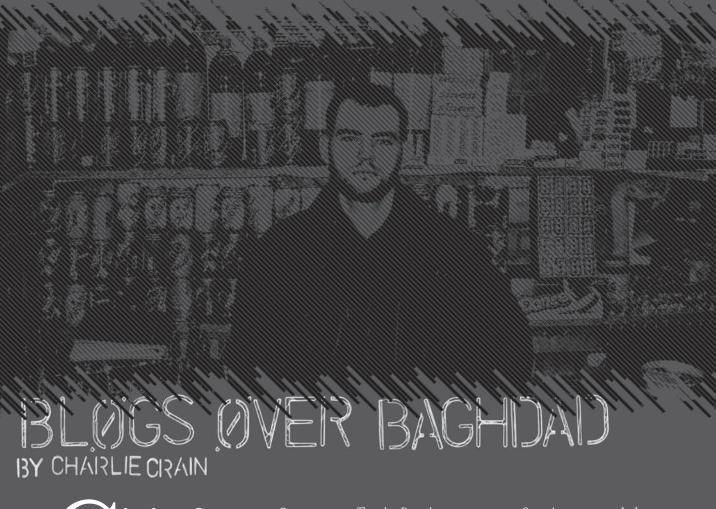
"I think [street protests] will go away," Trippi said, "because that is playing into trying to get something on television, you know, trying to provide some entertainment so that enough people will pay attention to the protests and think about it. But I don't think that's the wave of the future."

That's why Trippi called his book The Revolution Will Not Be Televised. As the Bush Administration continues to challenge the relevance of political reporters by simply ignoring their questions, so grassroots organizing proceeds without mainstream media filters. "You can't put that genie back in the bottle," he said. "I think it's just going to grow, and I don't that we're going to be the knights in shining armor that go change the place. And it'll probably be 3 or 4 million of us."

Trippi was implying that even if Kerry won with his 2 million online supportersin 2004, he wouldn't be leading the revolution. It would come later, a "bottom-up generational change in this country that demands that the younger generation take responsibility for this country's future and change it." It would come only with the election of a candidate whose support was fundamentally based in these new political methods.

The red bat incident is a good example of how the online political revolution has not yet come of age. After all, even when Dean took the stage with a red bat, an idea that had arrived 90 minutes ago from one of hundreds of thousands of Dean supporters, the bat was on TV. The web audience for campaign video was still small, and it was still the traditional media who was back to caution, prudence. A few years decided whether or not to show everyone else. The

FEATURE FEATURE



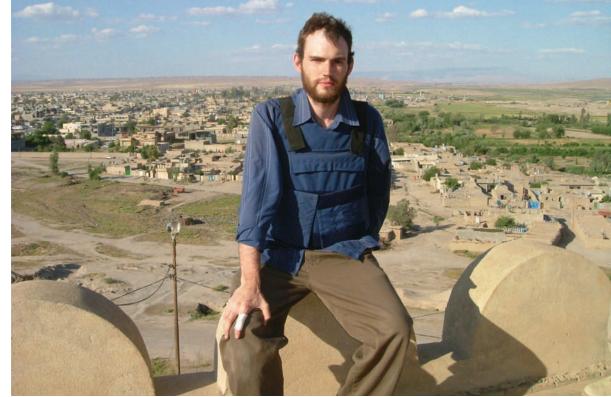
harlie Crain, 26, arrived in Iraq in January of 2004 with a new master's degree in journalism. He intended on selling stories to U.S. news media as a freelancer.

More than a year later, Crain has been published in Time Magazine embedded in combat zones, Crain offers readers a day-to-day account bombing. of his exploits on his web log. The blog entry, written after the bomb-

Thursday December 30, 2004, 9:58am. As we turned the corner to head down towards the bombing we ran into what was technically, I suppose, a SCIRI checkpoint. It was a couple older, ratty looking guys carrying Kalashnikovs and telling us we couldn't go any further.

As we negotiated a striking woman in a headscarf and long dress watched us from the shadows just inside her front gate. A bald man with a mostly toothless smile came out with a glass and a pitcher of water and offered us something to drink. As we reached the bottom of our bag of tricks, and still hadn't talked our way closer to the bombing, we chatted up a young and the Washington Post. Often boy who told us 35 people had been killed. Totally unreliable, but not necessarily less reliable than what anyone else says in the hours immediately following a

We debated trying another route to get closer, but there were American Humvees parked down in that following is an excerpt from his direction. At some point the big pack of reporters split into a few smaller groups. Chris and I discussed heading to the hospitals to get a sense of the number ing of a checkpoint in December. of casualties. As we walked back past the bridge, to-



said about getting a bird's-eye-view. There was some debate about how safe that was, but we figured we'd walk up with our press ID out and be ready to turn around if we were told to. It was me and Chris, Chris' translator and Iraqi photographer from Getty Im-

We started walking up the long incline, and saw figures coming towards us. In the morning glare they they were wearing body armor, or if one was toting a camera or an RPG. It turned out they were journallook right down on the carnage. Everything was cool; just be prepared to do what you're told if someone stop and who ran away instead. decides you shouldn't be there.

As we climbed more the crest of the bridge came into view. There was some kind of American armored vehicle there—too small to be an Abrams, but it didn't look like a Bradley, either. Chris recognized it as a Stryker. Now we were walking on bits of broken glass. There were saucer-sized chunks of metal on the pavement, and a shard of metal the size and shape of a car's hood was wedged between the pedestrian walkway's guardrails.

We walked to the edge and looked down. After all that it looked like what most bombed areas look like-there were some blackened cars,

wards our cars, I remembered what the soldier had a couple blackened buildings and lots of people with guns milling around amidst the emergency vehicles. I'd never been to that SCIRI office and had no point of reference. I had no sense, from 60 feet up, of the scale of destruction. In fairness to my powers of observation we couldn't have been standing there ten seconds when someone on the ground started shouting at us in Arabic. I quickly stepped away from the edge, and Chris followed suit almost immediately. could've been anyone or anything-I couldn't tell if He told me later that the SCIRI militiaman on the ground had aimed his Kalashnikov at him.

A day or so later another reporter, who'd been ists. The photographer told us we could go up and on the ground at the time, mentioned that there had been reporters up on the bridge who'd been told to

BAGHBLOG.BLOGSPOT.C

"I think that was us," I said. "But it was more like someone started screaming in Arabic and then pointed his gun at us."

We got off the guardrail and started walking back down the bridge. Even when we were on the ground we'd heard intermittent gunfire-AK's, American .50 cals. After a bombing security guards and private militias get edgy and throw a lot of lead around. We heard a shot come from down below. Remembering my Centurion training I hit the deck, but when I saw everyone in front of me hunched over and scuttling away like crabs I picked myself up and followed suit. We straightened up.

We hadn't made it too far down

the bridge when three

Iraqi Police SUV's

screamed towards

us and screeched

to a halt. Out

popped a bunch

of gun-

toting guys in plainclothes, who immediately started bellowing at us. One of the ways the US filled out the Iraqi Police was folding local militias onto the force these guys were probably SCIRI militia working for the local precinct. They weren't there to fuck around. In particular, one big, bearded guy with a pistol was shouting at the top of his lungs and waving his gun around wildly.

A younger, calmer man approached and made as if to frisk me, and I obliged him. He pulled my sat phone out of my jacket pocket, took a look at it, and surprised me by giving it back. He patted my wallet and made me take it

out of my pocket. Employing the cross-cultural skills that have made a star in Iraq, I said, "wallet," in English, and slowly put it back in my pocket. I was again surprised that he let me. While this was going on Chris' translator was convincing the guy in charge that we were journalists. We'd been waving our credentials and passports, but it's obviously better to have a local explain the situation in Arabic.

the pistol, who was standing about five feet in front of me. He was mostly waving his gun below his waist, so it pointed at my feet, as he screamed. But it started inching up, pointing closer to areas that I'd prefer not to part with. I've had Kalashnikovs pointed square at my chest twice by Iraqi security forces—both times at checkpoints I stumbled across accidentally. This was dicier. If a calm man is pointing a gun right at you and hasn't shot you there's a good chance nothing bad will happen if you follow directions. When a hothead is getting careless with his weapon it's harder to pre-

My natural reaction was maybe not the most helpful—I hissed "Keep your fucking weapon down."

Chris' response to me was probably better; he hissed-not unkindly-something along the lines of "Shut the fuck up." I did, the guy seemed to chill out, and we were cleared to walk away. I didn't realize im-











his issue's featured artist is Chuck Anderson, who works under the name NoPattern in suburban Chicago. At age 19, Anderson has worked as a graphic designer for more than a dozen magazines, including XLR8R, Tokion, and Flaunt. He's also lent his aesthetic skills to clients such as Absolut Vodka, Citibank, and Microsoft. In the last few pages you've seen a retrospective of his work, as well as an original image created exclusively for The Passenger.

Graham Webster: When did you start designing?

Chuck Anderson: Well, that question goes a bit deeper than just talking about design. I've been artistic my whole life, starting out real young doing drawings and just being creative—just drawing on everything I could find and whatnot. Natural progression and discovery from pen and paper to the computer just kind of happened. I landed a copy of Photoshop back in like 7th grade, and just would mess around with it every single day. I took it more and more seriously in high school, and eventually it was just as second-nature to me as pen and paper and drawing were. It's kind of history from there: I just kept going and one thing led to another, and here I am working full time as a freelancer.

How did you get into doing pro work?

I had a job at a screenprinter for a little under a year, and towards the end of the job, things just kind of started falling apart. The workload was not sufficient for me anymore, and I just had to move on. I left that job with no plans in front of me. It was risky, and I was considering going back to just working at a bookstore for some time and just hoping to do something with





my design. I had Nopattern.com for over a year at the time, with just personal work on it, and I decided maybe it was time for me to start getting my work out there and sending it to some people who might be interested. So I met some good people, sent my work out here and there, and landed some very cool first jobs, including ones for a club in Chicago called Smartbar and the magazine XLR8R. From there things just snowballed.

Why not go to design school?

Too much time and money to pay for what I can learn on my own if I want it bad enough. Plain and simple. I was more motivated and driven than any school would know what to do with, so I just went after things by myself.

Do you have specific inspirations, or certain things you do when you need to work?

Yeah, sometimes I just need to eat something and take a break and talk to people, or play some Scrabble, or just draw-not think about work. Sometimes I just visit random sites and browse around. But when I really need inspiration, I get off my chair and away from the computer and get in my car and drive around—go to a bookstore or just drive and enjoy music and my surroundings. There is so much beauty around us we fail to see when we're too busy staring at a screen all day, it's just sad that more people don't take the time to appreciate what God has really blessed us with. As far as inspiration, my family, girlfriend, friends-all a huge inspiration to me. I collect a lot of KAWS figures and work, and I collect a lot of magazines too.

Do you think working for commercial clients has an effect on your work?

It has a great effect for my work, my reputation, and my confidence. When I get a job that will put Audi or Microsoft on my client list, I just feel so rewarded for the hard work I've done. I'm getting paid for doing what I love, man, it can't get better than that. That is the description of a perfect job: getting paid for what you love. And loving what you do is so important. It really is. Commercial clients, private clients, personal favors for friends, whatever. Any work I do that I put my heart and time into is worth it and has a positive effect on me.

Any favorite client?

I enjoy working with XLR8R Magazine, Complex Magazine, Microsoft-which allowed me a great trip to San Francisco, but mostly the personal projects I'm working on right now are my favorite things to do. I love most of my clients—I wouldn't work for them if I didn't like them.

What is NP&CO.?

NP&CO. is a sister company to NoPattern that is getting ready to launch. Basically an online store for me to sell prints, original artwork, products, collaborations. Just another outlet for creativity really.

Why is your company called NoPat-

Because every time I do something, I have to have pushed myself forward a little bit. Even if it's a development or progression of a previously done style I've worked with, I still have to experiment and do something new. Having no set pattern in my work really helps me keep things fresh and alive. It means to always progress. •

We Have Visual Cheaper tools of trade bring filmmaking to the masses By: Oscar Boyson Impely Andrew Miller

Buster Keaton: A Parable

oseph Keaton Jr. was a child of vaudeville. His upbringing would be impossible today: tumbling around the stage as an infant, traveling the circuit and performing with his parents, attending less than one day of school in his entire adolescence (despite the persistent efforts of child welfare advocates to return him to class and to convict his parents of child abuse for the stunts young "Buster" survived onstage). The nickname was given to him by his godfather, the magician Harry Houdini, who noticed Keaton's tolerance for pain when the six-month-old child tumbled down a flight of stairs and emerged seemingly unaffected, neither startled nor scathed by the fall.

After a career in vaudeville marked by laughter, numerous encounters with famous performers, and an alcoholic and occasionally abusive father, 21-yearold Keaton left the stage at an age when many were just entering it. He acted in a film the first day he arrived in Hollywood. After a long day in front of the camera alongside the man who would become his mentor,

Fatty Arbuckle, Keaton asked if he might take the camera home with him to learn how the machine worked. The request was granted, and that night, before going back to work the next morning, Keaton took the entire camera apart and put it together again, examining each mechanism of the extraordinary instrument that had fascinated his mind and captured his image earlier that day. The next morning he returned the camera and thus began a career that would be brilliant, illustrious, and tragic. Within a few weeks he was directing when Arbuckle acted; within a few years he was turning out his own short films, soon followed by a string of superb and successful features.

Each film is one that only Keaton could have made. Each film reflects the soul and predicament of a man who grew up on the vaudeville stage, a man who would not smile himself but was always looking for a laugh—a man who learned, understood, and made films on his own terms because it never occurred to him to do it any other way. When the sound era arrived and Keaton could no longer continue this specific and personal approach to the medium, his filmmaking career ended. He spent the last 35 years of his life away from the camera, with the exception of small acting and producing roles in other people's films. The real Buster seemed to die with his art; he lived at times self-destructively, drinking and smoking excessively and gaining weight after the thing he loved was taken away from him. He had neither the money nor the equipment—nor the audience—to create in the way he always had, and for him making films the way someone else had imagined them was not worth the price of losing his own artistic sensibility.

filmmakers: Orson Welles, Samuel Fuller, and ▲ John Cassavetes all struggled in some way to stay true to their personal visions while working within the demanding financial confines of the motion picture medium. For film is terribly expensive, and to fail with film inevitably implies a large loss of money. And so film becomes, at least in the dominant American understanding, a product with artistic possibility

instead of an art with financial potential. Students attend film school and learn how make the product,1 then go to studios to produce, hone, test, and market it. If they want their product to considered "edgy," "different," or "artis-

tic," they go to a studio that proclaims its understanding of these product features, where slightly different processes and marketing formulas are implemented in order to create a product that meets standards for the "edgy," "different," or "artistic" classification. Somewhere along the way, the artistic impulse that spills out a poem or inspires a painting is quietly brushed aside, and the final product is, at best, a compromised vision. Almost always, concern for the millions of dollars at stake arises to supersede the impulse, and the dubious instinct to adhere to filmschool rules or studio standards and formulas intervenes. There are exceptions, of course, particularly in the world of experimental film, where artists rarely cater to any vision other than their own. But because of the institution's understanding (and creation) of what an audience wants to see, the American feature is

a form that rarely permits filmmaking for the sake of filmmaking: uncompromised artistic sensibility and the possibility of getting exactly what one wants out of cinema, economic incentives aside.

The relatively recent arrival of digital video and desktop computer editing puts a definite spin on this long-accepted but thoroughly unsatisfying situation. Using digital video equipment and desktop editing software requires no experience, no big crews or equipment, and comparatively few financial resources. A camera can be bought or borrowed, tapes are an easy purchase, and the fact that video editing software 🔭 t's a conflict that plagues many great American 🏻 is standard on many new computers means post-production can entail simply using a machine that one had already purchased for more practical purposes. If film schools provide technical training and studios deliver the budget, equipment, and crew, digital video effectively clears two major roadblocks that have always impeded pure and informal accessibility to the medium of moving pictures. Working with this technology myself and seeing my peers enjoy positive cre-

> ative experiences with it, the utopian in me (and others I'm sure) saw the potential for a new form of moviemaking that might give way to something of a moving picture renaissance.

Furthermore, where the high production

costs and unique presentation standards of film almost inevitably necessitate selling one's movie in order to distribute it and recoup investments, makers of digital videos need not concern themselves with the pressures of theatrical distribution and projection.3 While this would seem to distinguish film as the superior medium—if you want your movie to be shown in theatres, it must be film—it actually liberates video from the standards and conventions of an ugly distribution industry and suggests its place as an "underground" movie medium, which has barely existed in the States since studios colonized major underground territory by incorporating the "independent" label

These were the ponderings keeping me optimistic as I battled with the film problem. Why couldn't we make videos in the same hobby manner in which

and genre into their system.

"The whole idea is to begin recording without knowing where the hell we're going, to destroy the skeleton the minute we begin filming." -Damian M. Debret Viana

FEATURE

our parents watched movies? Why couldn't a kid start making videos at a young age instead of picking up a guitar or a paintbrush? The filmmaker and his audience have always been separated by a lack of familiarity with the process and technology of the medium. Why couldn't digital video turn these audience members into actual creators, closing that gap and expanding the form at the same time? Digital video could be like to be fading, just as American "independent film"

a sculptor's wood or wire, the medium he turned to when he lacked the funds, commission, or experience to work in marble.

hen I de-cided to spend five months living and studying in Buenos Aires, Argen-

tina, I thought it might provide a good opportunity to investigate this hope for the digital medium and understand its accessibility within more modest circumstances.

The Argentine film scene is quite different from its American counterpart. Sadly, the most popular and profitable films in Argentina (and in the United States) are usually the very worst representations of American cinema. However, while Hollywood has enormous influence over Argentine theatres and audiences, its reach only partially extends to the actual production of films, el cine nacional, and the people who make them. Though Argentine producers may have some desire to challenge the imported competition, they simply cannot afford to create Hollywood-level superproductions, so the Argentine filmmaker must find different ways to appeal to his audience. As in almost every country besides the United States, government-financed productions constitute a considerable proportion of the national film output, especially outside the limited commercial realm. Government money comes in the form of grants, not investments, so while certain standards and regulations guide the selection process, the hope of fostering a distinct and inspired national cinema usually outweighs considerations of potential earnings.

Hollywood wannabes aside, the current Argentine scene vaguely resembles the American independent film movement in the late '80s and early '90s. In roughly the past eight years, a number of motivated Argentine film school graduates4 have put out

excellent, low-budget features and shorts which have found praise and popularity abroad in festivals but little support from audiences in their home country.⁵ These artists have made films because they wanted to, working with little money, small crews, and friends or acquaintances instead of professional actors.

But this small explosion of "pure" cinema appears

quickly became confused about its

purpose and inhibited by its audience in a way that its godfather, John Cassavetes, never was. European investment has stimulated independent production, but it may also have encouraged a separate film culture that

further alienates popular audiences, as many would say "true" independent film has in the United States.⁶ For the Buenos Aires student, film is currently a choice of study that is "muy cool, muy fashion," as one taxi driver described it to me, using two English words that have incorporated themselves into the urban vocabulary (and ironically evoke Hollywood priorities). Between this and the uncomfortable suspicion that newer low-budget Argentine works seem to be catering to a certain image of successful film rather than making pure and personal cinema, Buenos Aires too seemed in need of something more independent than "independent film."

I arrived wondering if and how digital video might be filling that void and maximizing potential for expression, perhaps challenging the conventional modes of production for an expensive art in a poor country. Indeed, the lack of Hollywoodish aspirations in film schools, the relatively recent surge of fresh and personal cinema, and the attitude of a city built on cultural and regional contradictions all encouraged me to believe that an investigation of video's presence in Buenos Aires would be worthwhile. Specifically, I looked for young people taking advantage of digital video's accessibility to work outside the medium's traditional contexts and to pursue real problems, personal dilemmas, and individual interests without worrying about industry standards, the possibility of distribution, or film school rules.

amián M. Debret Viana is a literature student at the University of Buenos Aires. His appearance evokes portraits of the great classical composers: visible but elusive genius that only comes to life when the music begins. Turtleneck, pants, and it can also have friendly connotations), and the law painted fingernails accentuate a petit, wiry frame. The wardrobe matches the fingernails, and the fingernails match the hair—black, long, curly yet precise, explosive stuff that frames his face to elegant effect. Narrow, noble features, alert eyes behind glasses; he is an easy man to remember. I first saw him in a seminar at the university, a bit removed from the class both by where he was sitting (near the door, outside the established discussion circle) and by the fact that he was the only letras student in an artes seminar. In the first conversation we had, I asked him what he was doing that weekend. He told me he was making a movie.

Debret Viana and his friend Pablo Valle are making a feature-length video in a way that only today's technology would permit, and their process is one that any "well-trained" film student would dismiss as amateurish. Using three video cameras of different analog and digital formats, no fixed script, and a general agreement that "the whole idea is to be a bit untidy," the two are determined "to make a movie

couples pass by resulted in a visual inquiry into the nature of the Argentine boyfriend/girlfriend dynamic, something they call la ley de embudo. Boludo is an Argentine slang word roughly akin to "asshole" (though they speak of essentially concludes that the majority of beautiful Argentine women end up in relationships with these types of men (la más linda con el más boludo). Incorporating dreams, conversations, walks, literature, inspirations, and frustrations, they capture whatever they can under the principal thematic hope of examining solitude in the city. But sticking to this theme is hardly the goal. There's a genuine desire to understand the experience as they work, to learn something they didn't know before they began. "It's not improvisation," says Damián. "We know what we're trying to explore. But we also know there are no answers.'

Before I learned about Damián's project, I had searched somewhat fruitlessly in and around film schools for people using the technology in the same way. While I didn't find people practicing the pure, liberated approach I had imagined, the experience did shed some light on the video format's place, uses, and successes among young people in an urban at-

Digital video has the potential to redefine the creative relationship with the moving picure medium, permitting more originals to enter the field and create the art on their own terms.

without making a production," as Damián put it. The fer students access to digital video production equippriority is exploration: themselves, the medium, and their ideas. They shoot when they can, usually together but also alone, should impulse or inspiration randomly strike. They brainstorm, argue, and exchange ideas constantly, if not in person, through a shared website. Fundamentally, they approach any idea or problem that fascinates or bothers them and explore it with their cameras, learning more about it in the process. A recent dream and general frustration with the imprisoning effect of cellular phones inspired them to shoot a scene examining that technology.

Sitting together on a street corner and watching

Buenos Aires is no digital Mecca where people are constantly shooting video or making hobby movies in their spare time. The MiniDV Handicam is not nearly as present as it is in the States, and few public or private high schools of-

ment (an opportunity that is increasingly common in the United States). But while the technology may not be launching any utopian visual renaissance in Buenos Aires, it still has a fundamental role in the city's audiovisual world, including a few promising appearances outside of the establishment.

As in the United States, the functionality and accessibility of the digital format is most prevalent in the city's film schools. At the private Universidad del Cine and the public Instituto Nacional de Cinematografia y Artes Audiovisuales, students learn video first, then advance to the more expensive formats of 16mm

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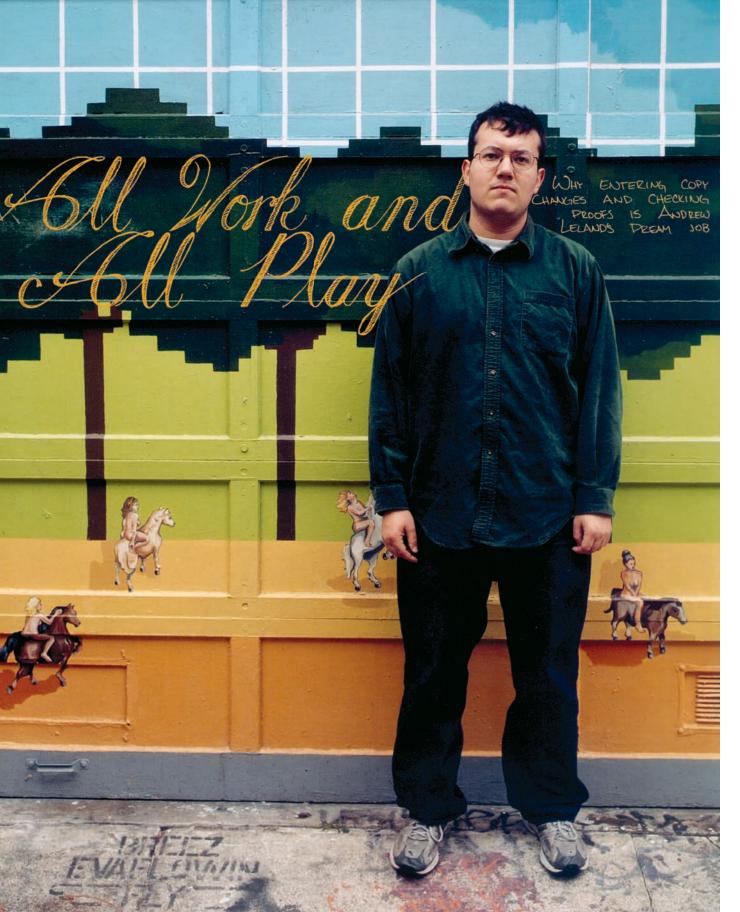
Why couldn't we make videos

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movies? Why couldn't a kid start



BY DOROTHY KRONICK
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW MOISEY

ndrew Leland works above a pirate supply store. The shop is the kind of place that would make a real pirate—or an imaginative child enamored with pirates—quite comfortable: the room is small and dim, the ceiling hung low with rope and heavy clothesline. One wall is dotted with wooden drawers, each filled with useful treasure like hook protectors (corks) or glass eyes. A three-foot basin of lard squats beneath a framed sign suggesting possible uses: grubcooking, greased mast competitions, gift-wrap.

Though the shop is quite possibly the nation's only pirate-focused retail outlet, its location-826 Valencia Street in San Francisco-is best known for a different reason: the building houses the offices of Dave Eggers's publication McSweeney's Quarterly and its sister magazine The Believer, a two-year-old monthly about books and culture. Stacks of The Believer and a number of other related literary products nestle among the pirate flags and pastel-colored eye patches in the store, which Eggers and his team created as a playful invitation to all of the building's many writing-related activities. Despite appearances in the shop, though, work in the magazine offices is serious. As managing editor of The Believer, Andrew has a lot to do. But rather than ban the silliness and whimsy that cloak the pirate store, rather than try to separate work and play, Andrew and his coworkers welcome it.

In the traditional vision of a serious workplace (the kind of workplace that would produce a young magazine as critically acclaimed as The Believer) there is a clear division between the productive labor that supposedly goes on in offices and behind desks and the unproductive jokes and gossip that accompany doughnut and coffee breaks. There's work, and then there's fun. Concentration, and then drinks after five p.m. The cubicle, and the water cooler. Separate.

Not so in the Believer offices. Where Andrew works, most people are fans of children—826 Valencia is also home to Eggers' nonprofit writing center for children—and something of a youthful levity affects the entire operation. Being funny and relaxed is part of doing a good job. If Believer bosses did annual employee reviews, Andrew's frequent use of the word "ticklepants," for example, would be a positive note in his file. Of course, they don't do annual employee reviews. Nor do they have cubicles. At The Believer, work and play are synergistic. That's what makes Andrew so good at his job, and that's what makes his job so good for him.

n the fine summer day when I joined him for lunch, Andrew was temporarily deaf in one ear, the result of an unfortunate com-

bination of water sports and loud live music. After a lakeside family reunion, Andrew's ear had popped as band Souled American took the stage at Aquarius Records in San Francisco, near The Believer offices. "It was an ecstatic moment," he told me.

I walked on his right—close to his good ear—as we approached his chosen sandwich venue, a small gourmet grocery equipped with a deli counter.

"Hello—" Andrew paused to read the clerk's nametag. He grinned. "—Walker. I'm Andrew. It's nice to meet you."

"It's nice to meet you, Andrew," Walker smiled back. She looked at him across the glass deli counter. In contrast to some of the skinny, long-haired interns in the magazine office, Andrew more closely resembles a stereotypical pre-comic-book-comeback comic book fan—slightly ruffled hair, unathletic physique, wire-rim glasses—than the stereotypical lit-savvy hipster in seersucker and Docksiders, though in fact he is much more the latter. Wearing jeans and New Balance sneakers and a Comic Relief VI t-shirt (a gift from his father), Andrew gazed up at the sandwich menu. Walker recommended the turkey and the Cuban.

"I'll take the turkey," he decided.

Andrew suggested we eat on a grassy knoll a few blocks away. About halfway up we sat down with our backs to the wind. Andrew unwrapped the white paper around his sandwich.

"Yeah, I love living here," he answered me. "You know: cool young people, arts, literary arts—" Andrew looked down at his lunch. "—Sandwiches."

The Fun Goes On

ndrew is managing editor of the The Believer, a job that is neither particularly creative nor especially easy. The primary responsibilities are fairly mechanical: Andrew must turn streams of copy, corrections, charts, and drawings into a physical, readable magazine. He tames word and image files into neat Quark packages to send to the printer in Canada. He checks proofs. He reads submissions (the mag gets about seven per week) and forwards to the editors those that "singe his inbox" or those that are "immediately excellent, just glowing or flashing." He supervises fact-checking interns. He enters copyedit changes.

"That part is full of decisions," Andrew wrote in an email, describing copyedits. "'Is this change worth querying the author, or should I just make it? Is this a good call on the part of the copyeditor, or should I override him? Is his change even correct here? If it's correct, is it necessary? Is it messing with the writer's style? Am I gay?'"

If his job isn't always intellectually demanding,

though, it can be difficult in other ways. After three years studying English at Oberlin College-drumming for a band called the Facial Expressions, rifling through records at the college radio station, sporadically pulling decent grades—the working world was stressful at first. Initially Andrew worked such long days that only after two months on the job did he return home before sunset, finally discovering (to his surprise) that he lived next to a big grassy hill. He suffered the agony of using Adobe programs without knowing the keyboard shortcuts. And when he finally finished his tasks for the first issue he worked on, when his boss Dave Eggers looked at his exhausted face and said, "I'll take it from here," Andrew burst into tears.

"I was like, 'I'll be right back.' And then... aaaaa!" he recalled. "It was just so intense, handing over all that work." A coworker told him to go home and drink a beer before going to sleep.

But despite the sometimes drab nature of layout tasks, despite the intense periods of work before sending each issue to the printer, Andrew still considers the post his dream job. The work environment—if that's an appropriate term for such a lighthearted atmosphere—is so spirited and entertaining that it makes up for everything else.

his first months, the magazine staff worked out of a tiny room reachable only by ladder. Six desks were squeezed up against the walls, and Andrew made space for himself in one corner. The exchange of jokes and stories was so constant that the group would sometimes try to enforce quiet-time, only to have it broken in minutes. Rare patches of silence were filled with music-The Kinks, the Microphones, Neil Young.

The staff has since moved into a more spacious office, where distraction is somewhat easier to resist. It is decorated with a Miracle-Gro garden and posters from Believer events. But the fun goes on, despite the extra room. Andrew writes headlines like, "A ninja is the best defense against anti-ninja forces" and "Time Must Die." He exchanges emails with in-house hero David Berman, a writer and lead singer of the band Silver Jews. When Andrew is stressed out, he doesn't have to discreetly step outside for fresh air or a cigarette—he can run around or yell or play loud music. He answers the phone in a Latvian accent. He works with his shirt off, if he feels like it, or drinks malt liquor at his desk.

ur sandwiches were really delicious, and it was obvious Andrew was enjoying his. He

home more often, but still ends up eating out almost every day. It's usually Mexican.

"Around here there's this whole elaborate and contentious ranking system of the taquerias," he observed. "It's strange how Mexican food in particular brings out people's loyalty."

We looked out over the low-slung buildings of the Mission District and I asked Andrew about his typical workday. I should have known better.

"Oh, it varies. You know," he began, in a tone that said 'I'm mocking the fact that people actually sincerely sum themselves up like this for reporters,' "I'm not a very consistent guy." He was serious again. "No but, really, sometimes I go through good running periods, like eight months ago I would run to Golden Gate Park. But sometimes," (Andrew reverted to the mocking tone) "-sometimes I'll wake up and just have a cigarette! Sometimes, I'll get in at noon, and sometimes," -he feigned amazement at the lack of straight-world regularity in his life-"sometimes I'll be in there at seven forty-five!"

Fun with Fast Food

efore working at the Believer, Andrew interned at Walt Disney Imagineering, where (among other things) he came up with names for food The fun started as soon as Andrew arrived. In items sold at the amusement park Disney's California Adventure. That job, as it turned out, played a role in initially getting The Believer's attention. But Andrew's path to The Believer started much earlier.

> About five years ago, when he was a junior in high school, Andrew was staying with his aunt while his mother contemplated a move to California. One afternoon he found a copy of David Foster Wallace's essay collection A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again on his aunt's bookshelf.

> "David Foster Wallace is the reason I'm here right now," he says. "I can say that 100 percent, with absolute certainty. I read that second essay and it changed my life more than any other piece of writing," Andrew said. (The second essay in the DFW collection is a semi-academic treatise on the impact of television on contemporary fiction writers.) He put his sandwich down for the first time. "I went out and read every book he mentions in that essay and became completely obsessed with it and with him. I read "Infinite Jest." That essay clued me into this whole world of literature, of literature being experimental, and gave me a more nuanced view of what's out there. Before I was kind of like, 'Books. I like books. I like books that are funny. I kind of like funny books."

Soon after the Wallace discovery, Andrew picked told me that he strives to bring lunch from up an issue of The New Yorker that contained both an excerpt from Dave Eggers's A Heartbreaking Work of had never read a major Russian novel. "That should Staggering Genius and an article on the author's magazine McSweeney's. When Andrew saw a Wallace short story printed on the spine of McSweeney's, Andrew started reading the magazine's website religiously.

Thanks to his devoted daily trolling of the site, Andrew was among the first to notice that the publication was looking for summer interns. He sent a message to Eli Horowitz, the same man who would later hire him as managing editor.

"My first e-mail was like, 'Dear sirs: I am extremely official guy, wearing a suit," Andrew said. A couple months later, he hadn't heard from the publication. goofy-ass one."

It was then that the skills Andrew honed as a hotdog christener worked to his advantage. He explained to Horowitz that it was his job to come up with names for menu items-names like La Dolce Weiner, Some Like it Hot Dog, and Hot Dog Day Afternoon. Horowitz promptly invited him to be one of seven McSweeney's interns for the summer of 2002.

during another internship led Eli to think of him when the first managing editor of the The Believer, left the publication. Excellent performance as in: he got along really well with Believer staff. As in: he knew how to work hard and make jokes at the same time. Sure, it helped that he could fix computers and use Dreamweaver. But Andrew himself admits that it wasn't his brilliant copyediting that landed him his dream job.

"I've thought a lot about this, in terms of why I was hired instead of other people, because I wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed," he said. "There were other tools in the shed that they could have picked that could have thought of better headlines and been more organized and more efficient and better designers. In terms of my raw skills there were better people around. But socially, I'm good at interacting with different people—the printer, the editors, the interns—and I think that made up for my lack of super genius."

I asked Andrew if being "good with people" was his euphemism for just being really funny.

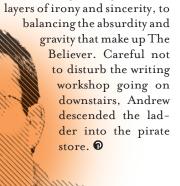
"Well, no-" he stammered, "It's what I said- I'm good with people. Of course, I'm also-" Andrew dropped his voice several octaves, "-fuckin' hilarious!"

On the way back to his office we swung by the apartment Andrew shares with other "respectful rock dudes" to pick up a pack of American Spirit cigarettes, one of which he smoked on the walk back. We talked about funny words (ticklepants, for example), Iggy Pop, and books. Andrew told me he

be the headline of the article," Andrew suggested, smiling, clearly pleased with the suggestion. "'Managing Editor of The Believer has never read a major Russian novel."

nefore we said goodbye Andrew agreed to show me the tiny loft that had been the original Believer/McSweeney's office. There, a lone intern worked on a lone computer at a desk in the middle of the room. The window was covered with a slip of lavender satin.

"What can I give you?" Andrew asked himself, "So I was like, that didn't work, I'm going to write a tossing aside the books and old issues that littered the floor. He came across Masterpiece Weirder, a Tony Goldmark CD of corporate and pop-music parody, and offered it to me. The cover art features a crude collage of penguins, an iceberg, and the artist gazing morosely at a slinky. I stared at it for a moment, trying to unravel the layers of irony involved in managers of San Francisco's only pirate supply store listening to a semi-sincere Goldmark track called "The Andrew's excellent performance that summer and Pirate Song." I did not succeed. Andrew interrupted my pondering to announce that he had to get back to work. He had a busy afternoon ahead of him. It was time for him to get back to sorting through his own







Somewhere deep in a stack of vinyl, RJD2 found the missing link between hip-hop and indie rock.

INTERVIEW BY GRAHAM WEBSTER ART BY RYAN DOUGLAS

RID2: I went to a vocational music school in high school for traditional music training. I always bought all kinds of records. You know: hip-hop, rock, whatever. I became a record collector and I kind of stumbled into DJ-ing, and that just led into production.

People have lots of genre names for your music. What do you prefer?

Oh I don't care. I think that instrumental hip-hop sorta makes sense, at least in terms of the descriptive. But it's got a lot of syllables, and that makes it a little laborious, you know. Beat music, instrumental hiphop, whatever. I don't really give a shit, you know what I mean?

Do you have any feeling of why Dead Ringer would have been a cool thing for somebody like me, someone who spends a lot of time with rock music or mainstream indie rock and all its fringes?

I get the same kind of rush from like a King Crimson groove or like listening to John Bonham as I do from Public Enemy or Big Daddy Kane or something like that. I think that at their heart, rhythmically and sonically, a lot of rock music and good rap music embody the same thing on an instrumental level. Why you might like it, or why you might think it's cool? I mean everybody likes a break from the norm. You know, for the indie rock kid who is probably listening to some rap music or some electronic music, or maybe even some really ignorant shit like The Diplomats or something, it's probably refreshing once in a while, 'cause it's the complete opposite of what you're points it— [He lets out a gaspish, frustrated sound.] I used to listening to.

Some of these tracks sound like they could be played by a regular band. Is that what you were going for?

Oh, yeah. When I was in high school, the thing that you didn't want to do was bite other people's styles. Coming up with your own thing is not nearly as prev-

Graham Webster: How did you get into music and all these, I hate to say, like, secret codes, but it was its own little underground rule of ethics-everything from what kind of drums you sampled to where you sampled them and what machines you bought and all this stupid little shit. And because of that, I'm stuck in this little thing of constantly assessing what's going on in terms of the status quo of rap music and hiphop, and saying, "How can I make something that's relevant, that recognizes this, but has left the center of it and is really off, doing its own thing?" So at a point, I realized: that's something that nobody was really trying to do, at least at the time, was approach it like a band. Take samples and use the tools that you would use just to make a rap beat, but approach it like you're arranging a rock song.

It sounds like this might be a little more active on Since We Last Spoke. Was this change on purpose?

I think I just got better with what I was doing, you know. I was shooting for Since We Last Spoke with Dead Ringer, but I'll be honest: I lost steam at a point. I wasn't as disciplined. I would say 95 percent of making an album is discipline, and with this record I was really a little more hardnosed with myself. I said, "You're definitely going to record way too much material. Record as much as you can, and hopefully 50 percent of that is all that's gonna make the album." And I really tried to make sure that every single song was very contoured. I wanted it to be the kind of thing where there wasn't four bars or eight bars that you could cut out of any of the songs and still have them make sense proportionally. I didn't want there to be any fat or dead weight. And I feel like Dead Ringer, at think some of the songs sound like they're kind of arranged like a band would, with bridges and choruses and all that kind of stuff, and other songs just backtrack into sort of ambient beat music, which isn't what I ever wanted to do.

If there was one track that you could have redone or alent now, but back then it was a big deal. There were left off of Dead Ringer what would that have been?

Probably "Silver Fox," or "The Proxy." I don't think Something like what I do is a little foreign to your that they're executed as well as they could have been. average rap fan, at least in terms of live. Before I had

How do you come up with one of these songs? Are you going through stacks of vinyl all the time looking for samples, or do you conceive of melodies first and look for samples to fit them?

Usually things start with a sample. The new record was a little different. I got a little more focused. With the new album, it'd start with just a beat. Everything I do starts just with drums and some kind of loop or something—just trying to make something that sounds good to possibly use on a rap record, or maybe not. And then you just kind of expand on it and keep building on it. And there's a cycle that I usually end up getting into. You have your main piece. Usually it's something that's more rhythmically oriented, and then maybe you try to find something melodic, like a high-end flute or guitar or vocals, or something, or just a melody that's gonna fit over the rhythm, and then you go with that. Then you say, oh, well, maybe you wanna have an alternate section where the melody stays the same but the instrumentation changes. So you just keep piggybacking off each other, bouncing between what a band would call, I guess, a riff and a melody. Once you come up with a new melody for the riff, you change the riff. And once you come up with a new riff, you change the melody, so on and so forth.

I know you're playing some of the instruments. What instruments do you play and what do you have on the live stage with you?

The instruments that are live on the record are keyboards, guitar, and bass. Mostly keyboards. And there's one of the songs that I've done on tour, but I've been touring with myself, and I feel like adapting everything to a band is an all or nothing thing. But I've been doing one of the songs. I have two DJ setups, so four turntables, and a sampler, and if I'm doing the song, I'll have an acoustic guitar.

What kind of people do you see in the crowds?

It's a lot of indie rock kids. The average fan is somewhere between 16 and 23, young white male, probably the same thing that you'd get at any other indie rock show.

So you don't get the hip-hop crowd as much?

It depends on the bill. If I'm touring with a whole bunch of rappers, then maybe there'll be more hiphop kids, but if I'm touring by myself that number goes down. A lot of traditional, just normal rap fans, I don't think that they're so inclined to go see a DJ.

Something like what I do is a little foreign to your average rap fan, at least in terms of live. Before I had seen a tour of somebody like Shadow or Prefuse, I don't know if I would have gone to see a DJ or somebody like me touring. I probably would have been more inclined to go to a club where I'm gonna get my local DJ playing rap records, you know.

You mentioned DJ Shadow and Prefuse 73. It's obvious that DJ's don't just throw down beats for MC's anymore. Do you think that this has something to do with the future of DJ-ing becoming something that emerges on its own?

Honestly, you know, I'll be frank with you. There's a very simple sociological reason that there is a lot of music like this out. There's a lot of kids between 22 and 32, maybe, that grew up listening to hip-hopsome of them being from the suburbs, some of them being from the city. They grew up liking rap music, and none of their friends rapped or whatever, but they liked the beats, or they bought records. DJ culture has always been something that is attractive to the more introverted end of hip-hop culture. It doesn't really attract the flamboyant, nutty-ass, "I want attention," psychologically adjusted, whatever; those are rappers. At a point, equipment got real cheap. Around 1997 or 1998, samplers and computers and home recording equipment shit got real, real, real, real cheap, and it just got hip. And I think it was the combination of the gear getting cheap and these kids. If there were more rappers, and if everybody grew up in a city environment, where they went to a school where a lot of kids rapped, I think there would be more kids trying to produce for MC's, and trying to be a rapper's DJ. It's one of those things that's kind of grown as a sociological necessity, if you will.

Do you think an audience grows for it at the same time?

I think if anything's done right, people are going to buy it. You could see somebody juggling monkeys, and if it's fucking interesting, that's going to sell records. On the flip side, I knew a lot of people that, throughout the '90s, became more and more disenchanted with hip-hop. When Bad Boy got popular and Puffy was on the radio sampling Diana Ross, the west coast had its comeback and things got ignorant again, I know a lot of people that were like, "Oh, well, I like the beats, but I just can't buy rap music any more 'cause it's all bullshit." And I think that that, from an audience perspective, created a climate where people still wanted to hear the beats, but they didn't want to hear a bunch of bullshit. \odot





BY BRAD HIRN ARTWORK BY MIKE TONG

pringtime hangs over the suburbs of Ashland, Mass. The evening of April 12, 1998, passes casually inside the McGrail household.

"We're not even a minute into this game, and clock is already pouring on the heat and pulling himself into the lead."

Mark McGrail, 13, works on his final homework assignment of the night, anxious to get in front of the family computer.

"Solid play by clock. He continues to dominate."

Turning off his desk lamp, Mark throws open his bedroom door and gallops down the stairs to the computer.

"clock is a smart player. If he needs to be sneaky, he'll do it. He will snake around the level just to save

his own hide."

Calling his dad for their daily session of cooperative Quake gaming, Mark double-clicks the signature "O" icon and awaits the menu screen.

"Out high! Out high!"

"Twenty-four health!"

six years later, Mark intently stares into a different monitor, seldom blinking as he swings his optical mouse across its extra-large cotton pad. A few pearls of sweat ski down his forehead; a crowd of spectators has gathered only a few feet behind his chair. Cheers and applause only slightly crack the wall of sound built by his headphones. Compared to the four teammates to his left—quite the shift from -a

middle-aged father-Mark is eerily silent.

"Coming in plasma! I'm dead, I'm dead," shouts a teammate.

Absorbing thousands of polygons into his pupils, Mark "clock" McGrail knows what is at stake: international acclaim, enduring prestige, and a \$30,000 check. The finest teams in Quake III: Arena Capture the Flag (Q3CTF) have gathered in Sweden for a worldwide competition, a tournament that will set a benchmark for all future events.

Six years ago, the rewards were much simpler: a unique brand of father-son bonding, a virtual hypnosis unparalleled in previous computer graphics, and the satisfaction of just playing the game—offline.

new breed of gamer. In one case, it was not so much skill as manipulation that attracted the attention of id Software. On May 27, 1997, Scottish player QL-Ettu entered an American server and systematically wiped out the players using sequential respawns—essentially predicting where each player would reappear after dying. John Cash of id Software witnessed Ettu's performance, and a Quake server-code update for random respawns was released four days later. Random respawns have since become a standard component of all competitive first-person shooters.

Call it the new wave of "cybersports" or maybe just a teenage excuse to forego a "real job," either way, this once-tiny collective in a remote corner of the inter-

As surburban bedrooms gave way to European convention halls, Mark began to see Quake as a professional career.

"My dad bought me Quake for my eleventh birthday, so I played single-player for a year, side-by-side
with him. Switching off after every death... It was so
much fun." Today, the competition is a bit different.

As suburban bedrooms gave way to European convention halls, Mark witnessed the progression of Quake from visual spectacle to competitive arena, even professional career. From Quake's 1996 release to last February's \$1,000,000 World Tour, computer gaming has surpassed its after-school status to become a "cyberathletic" platform. Brash thirteen-year-olds who shirked algebra to play on 56K modems now sell t-shirts on their team websites. Disapproving parents have been replaced with shouting fans. The degree of competition, far exceeding any computer-controlled opponent, is no longer about making it to the next level or beating the boss. Professional gaming subscribes to a different formula, one more closely resembling a tennis match than Mario.

Emerging Quake players demonstrated aim and strategies far beyond any ever witnessed in a video game; even Quake's creators found themselves in awe at the pinpoint accuracy and reflexive tact of this

net is quickly becoming its own subcultural phenomenon.

One of the most influential first-person gaming franchises ever, Quake wiped its genre clean, writing a new definition of virtual competition in the process. It is clear-cut and easy to understand: there are neither characters nor a compelling storyline (it's something about an apocalyptic monster). The player is dropped into a virtual arena, dotted with weapons, armor, and health packs. Early maps resembled thirteenth-century castles blanketed in perpetual shade—the perfect environment for Quake's innovative lighting effects. Torches hollowed out pits of light on the otherwise grey stone walls. Pools of lava smeared uneven glows upon arched ceilings and flying buttresses. Quake presented the most advanced 3D environments ever explored in a video game.

It would be a mistake, however, to credit a graphics engine with gaming's evolution. The emergence of international tournaments and six-figure sponsorships was driven not by polygon counts or dynamic shadows but by players committed to competition and organizers dedicated to running the events. Gaming

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has always been dependent on the players and their collective pursuit of a heightened virtual sensation; sitting before a crowd of more than 3,000 spectators, straddling anxiety and excitement, awaiting the 10-second countdown, eyeing the \$50,000 check in the middle of the stage, taking one last swig of water, and then finally hearing, "FIGHT!" A player listens intently to his opponent's movements, predicting his next move, controlling items across the map, and reacting to unexpected shots from a narrow corridor. There is a sustained concentration and an impressive intensity to any competitive player. To define sports by physical prowess alone is to ig-

nore the importance of hand-eye coordination, mental prediction, and raw intuition. Professional gaming is not a traditional sport, but athleticism is far-reaching and inclusive; Quake may appear on a computer screen, but the decisions, motions, and actions are all very human.

"Computers outweigh sports in a way to me, because they require a great knowledge of mind, hand and eye coordination—the mental aspect—and focus and discipline. I think it's a package of characteristics and intelligence," said John Blake, former coach of the University of Oklahoma football team and once the defensive line coach for the Dallas Cowboys. He attended The CPL Event in 1998. "I think it's just amazing. I've never seen anything like it, in all sports to be honest with you."

Despite Blake's optimism and gaming's newfound legitimacy, the definitive question remains: can computer gaming become a fully professional sport, one that supports a sizeable community of full-time players? Growing spectator crowds and increasing interest from sponsors have made many hopeful.

leven days after id Software's first shipment of Quake on July 22, 1996, the first online tournament was announced. Quake Gibfest promised "four-on-four teamplay with a referee and separate contests for modem players and direct players." Nowadays, gaming on a 56K modem is impossible; broadband access is a staple for competition. Nevertheless, the idea of a referee-a tournament volunteer monitoring the match and calling timeouts when needed—remains crucial in today's tournaments.

During the months following Quake's release, players across the globe stretched pre-conceived notions of what it meant to game. Alongside increasingly prestigious matches, the rapidly growing community of spectators was treated to trick-jumping videos and new modes of gameplay. Players wanted to watch other gamers compete; organized tournaments highlighted star players and helped professionalize what was a historically careless pastime. In 2000, QuakeTV was released, allowing spectators to connect to a match from their own computers and watch through the eyes of a player (it has since evolved into GamersTV).

Online gaming presented an entirely new variety of opponents, launching competitive gamers into uncharted virtual territory. The emergence of professional LAN (local area network) events created the vitally necessary level playing field, free of technologi-

Mark remembers his first Quake tournament with nostalgic fondness: eleven years old, inexperienced, huddling with his teammates before matches to discuss strategies; playing on a now-archaic Pentium desktop; and competing in one of the earliest LAN events. Mark was a "newbie," but his burgeoning intuition led his team to an impressive finish.

LAN events provide equal conditions for every competitor: identical computers running on a highspeed network, bypassing obstacles such as internet connections and computer speeds. Organizers rent out convention halls and journalists snap the traditional shot of huge rectangular tables with dozens of computers. Recent high-profile events have included impressive sponsor booths, music concerts, and workshops by industry veterans.

Nowadays, gaming on a 56K modem is impossible.

Online competition ripened in 1997 with the legendary Red Annihilation tournament. John Carmack, mastermind behind the Quake engine, offered his 1987 cherry-red Ferrari 328 GTS as grand prize. Red Annihilation stands as the first professional QUAKE event, propelling the gaming career of tourney winner Dennis "Thresh" Fong. His Microsoft sponsorship stands as one of the earliest examples of high-profile corporate attention.

While the vast majority of online players will never meet their gaming idols or attend a tournament, an gamers-those flying overseas to events, acquiring corporate sponsorships, being interviewed on ESPN, CNN, and MTV, and even earning salaries—is the

exclusive minority of semi-professional to fulltime quite, Texas, I witnessed firsthand the extent to which gaming tournaments had evolved. There, a curling line of teenagers, high school students, college students, and middle-aged office workers-mostly white hope of the entire gaming community. Angel Munoz, males—with backpacks, boxes, and hotel carts loaded

They kept observant eyes on their nearby computer towers. Mostly Windows here; Apple is an outcast.

the most recognizable pioneer of professional gaming, bears that community's torch at every Cyberathlete Professional League event.

goal is to bring this to the masses as a sport," he says.

Born of the same concepts behind the aforementioned Red Annihilation tournament—professionalism in event execution and recognition for the players—the CPL was officially launched on July 6, 1997, by Angel Munoz and his small team of co-workers. The term "Cyberathlete" was immediately trade-

The CPL launched its first event in November of 1997 with The FRAG. A modest 300 gamers gathered in a 12,000-square-foot hall at the InfoMart in Dallas. Small two-person tables were perched on the concrete floor. Aluminum chairs sat before each table. A handful of small sponsors set up booths around the tournament area. It was a simple event—a "beta," as one online journalist put it. Compared to the summer 2004 event—a 105,000 square foot festival attended by over 4,000 gamers from across the globe and sponsored by Intel, NVIDIA, Hitachi, and CompUSA-The FRAG was a prelude, a whisper, a quiet introduction to professional gaming.

Today, eight years after the original Quake was released by Texas-based id Software, the third incarnation, 1999's Quake III: Arena, is running its course as a professional computer gaming platform, although it is just one in a steadily growing line. When I attended id's QuakeCon 2001 in Mes-

with monitors instead of suitcases wound down the corridor. They sat against walls, leaned against windows, downed cans of soda from the nearby vend-"We really want this to be the NFL of gaming. Our ing machines, and made small talk with friends and strangers alike, all the while keeping observant eyes and attentive hands upon their nearby computer towers. Mostly Windows here; Apple is an outcast.

> They looked as if they had just teleported from their bedrooms: wrinkled t-shirts and backward caps, cargo shorts and baggy jeans, a few collars-gaming events aren't exactly fashion runways (although European attendees often unabashedly sport their hipster gear). Most of the players weren't there for the big tournament; in the eyes of many longtime casual players, Quake and cash prizes are a corrupt combination. The Bring Your Own Computer (BYOC) area, a staple at any event, draws the biggest crowd: players who have congregated on message boards, webmasters of gaming sites, lesser-known clans still playing just for fun, the usual bevy of Texas natives, public server frequenters, and, of course, the progaming minority-those there truly for the money. All in all, Quake-Con 2001 anticipated more than 3,000 attendees.

> The BYOC area is perhaps the most obvious example of gaming's progression from anti-social hobby to communal sub-culture. Huge banners sporting the QuakeCon logo and sponsor slogans hung on the walls. Cans of Mountain Dew quickly began to collect on tables. Gamers have made visual spectacles of their computer towers: fluorescent circuitry, windows for internal viewing, paintjobs typically seen on canvas, sculpted shapes, towers made of microwaves and

FEATURE FEATURE toy castles, cup-holders attached—designs impressive enough to warrant a separate contest.

Before big-money tournaments and corporate influence, there were only players on servers and in IRC (internet relay chat) channels, unconsciously recreating a familiar sports culture, characterized by a severe case of egotistical machismo. The symptoms manifested themselves on message boards:

"Well the whole booing thing is expected seeing as Daler is a local to texas and fatality isnt. Just like visitors get booed at sports games."

Competitive gaming, at its purest, is a clash of egos.

"I thought zero4 was gonna do an american pie when the girl touched his arm."

"esports is shit, its full of fat kids. Try training for an olmpyic sport and being fit in the progress, not just a typical 'fat' kid who good at a shitty computer game."

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"Thats pathetic. That is the only reason you will never see this as a sport to watch on television. Because half these immature 12 year olds who are the next generation gamers disrespect the people trying to pave the way for them to have careers in this. Grow up!"

These gaming forums often resemble private allmale high school lunch tables: one mouth starts the argument and, a hundred replies later, the dissenters, suck-up fans, and casual readers have coalesced for yet another thread of so-called conversation. Debating ethics (not to mention good spelling) are strictly prohibited. Nevertheless, a genuine camaraderie exists among teammates: many have played together for six or seven years. One Halloween, Mark gathered with teammates in Boston for a small LAN party and midnight outing in the neighborhood. Although no one wore costumes, one member kept a video camera in tow, filming their outdoor excursion. Online

gaming served as the beacon.

But competitive gaming, at its purest and most guilty, is a clash of egos, a hormonal surge of aggression and intense pride. After all, smack-talking is easier when you're behind a monitor. Immaturity and arrogance have historically plagued young teams too selfish to compromise; when every member wants a spot in the starting lineup, a few are bound to pick up their mice and search for new teams. When money and contracts are thrown into the mix, a new breed of problemsis unleashed—corporate hassles teenagers have never dealt with, sponsorship demands gamers have never faced. While pro teams add managers and legal staff to their organizations, amateurs either yearn for their shot at this dream career or bitterly soak in the nostalgia of late '90s gaming: playing for the sake of playing, a modest hobby of friendly competition and unique companionship. While such innocence still exists, corporate pressures and financial motivations have altered the competitive landscape. Professional gaming is a fragile venture for many hopeful teenagers, and one they are taking very seriously.

Twenty-year-old Sean "daler" Price, recent winner of a prestigious online Quake III tourney, is hoping to turn gaming into a full-time job: "I think with where pro gaming is going, with the increase in tournaments and money payouts, I could most certainly take this much more seriously to the point where I can consider it a fulltime job," he says. In an interview with Global Gaming League, Price describes a widespread concern among gamers inching towards professional status: whether the top eight or 16 players in an event will ever be able to live on prize money alone. "Hopefully in the future things will get better for all players who want to try it out and compete at a top level."

Jonathan "fatalIty" Wendel, college student-turned-pro gamer, is an obvious example of how serious computer gaming has become. During a 2000 international event, Wendel reportedly logged eight hours a day preparing. His infamous practice sessions proved well worth it: Wendel took home the \$40,000 grand prize and attracted a personal sponsorship (rumored to be \$200,000 over three years) from Razer, Inc., makers of specialized gaming mice. He has since continued his career as a full-time professional gamer, signing a partnership with electronics company Auravision, Inc.

The phenomena of fandom is another indicator of gaming's advancement. Message boards and websites for world famous teams feature daily comments from hundreds of fans, all hoping for responses from their favorite players. Team 3D has built an "Ask 3D" section into their website, allowing fans to submit ques-

tions to the players:

"Q: MARITAL STATUS? Any 3D members involved in a relationship? If so, how do you find time to see that person?"

"A: None of us are married, which isn't that surprising given the average age. As far as dating goes, we make time for everything important in life... So it's very easy to put gaming aside when needed."

World-famous European team Schroet Kommando offers private lessons, exclusive player forums, and access to SK servers for a monthly fee. How about a t-shirt embroidered with your favorite team's logo? Many top teams host online shops as well, using profits for travel expenses and new hardware. Tech companies such as Intel, AMD, NVIDIA, and CompUSA have taken an increasingly vital interest in professional teams. Team 3D is sponsored by Subway.

"I think it is now undeniable that the CPL has managed to launch a new spectator sport and that pro gaming is of interest to a great number of gamers across the globe," Munoz said in an interview on CS-Nation.net.

Despite these signs of success, the ultimate questions about professional gaming's viability remain: will Angel Munoz's hope for NFL status ever materialize? Will gaming ever be considered a public sport? Munoz is sure it will, and many young gamers think so too.

hree minutes left, and Mark is still staring. Headphones are still tunneling grunts, gunshots, and booms into his ears. He has remained quiet, focused until the 20-minute buzzer sounds.

His mouse is cloaked in a thin residue of sweat. Three years ago, the team was just a concept. Since then Mark has led cloud9 to several online championships and a \$10,000 victory at QuakeCon 2003.

Three minutes left, and cloud9 is edging toward victory against French team against All authority (aAa). Having won the first map and lost the second, cloud9 is clutching a fragile I-O lead in the closing minutes of the grand final. It has come down to a tiebreaker, a spectator's riveting treat and a player's anxious climax. Both teams are of the highest caliber, having earned national victories in their respective countries.

17:00: Paul "czm" Nelson of cloud9, resident pocketknife for his versatility and aim, has secured the base throughout the match. Mark and Vijal "viju" Patel are running offense, coordinating strategic attacks with Simon "yrim" Freely. Tim "Actionnewbs" Rieker is rotating between the two squads. Desperately

throwing their offense at the cloud9 flag, aAa hopes for a hole in the defense, a break in Paul's fortitude and a chance at tying this game. Their efforts are continuously stifled, however, as Paul picks them off with his rail gun. Meanwhile, Mark breaks through the outer corridor of the enemy base and reaches the interior. Snatching the flag, he jumps to the upper hall, avoiding any unnecessary gunfights. Approaching the middle crossing—the key point of interception for aAa—Mark strafe-jumps across the bridge and into his base, dodging enemy fire and scurrying to capture the flag. Yet the enemy flag carrier rounds a corner and

His mouse is cloaked in a thin residue of sweat.

meets Mark face-to-face, only to receive a definitive rail shot from the cloud9 runner. By 17:40, Mark has capped; cloud9 2-0.

Hundreds of spectators are clumped a few feet behind their seats. Their voices sway to the rhythm of cloud9's performance, dropping when the team hustles to defend their flag and rising when a cap is expected—only to be followed by a collective moan when the runner is taken out. The pressure is intense.

18:00. Taking advantage of aAa's struggling offense, Mark again sneaks into enemy territory, grabs the flag, and rushes back to his base. In less than twenty seconds, cloud9 secures their championship victory with a commanding 3-0 lead.

19:00. At this point, the match is virtually over. The final minute—a victory lap for the cloud9 members and a combined sigh of relief—tiptoes to the twenty minute mark. The buzzer sounds.

Mark, now a nineteen-year-old psychology major at Boston College, has prioritized his life, and competitive gaming is just an "extended hobby." Amidst a burgeoning soccer career, schoolwork, and a girlfriend, gaming sits in its own corner, perhaps isolated but never ignored. Mark recently participated in the \$50,000 Doom 3 tournament at the winter CPL event. It will not be his last. •

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ARTS

t the end of 2004, art critics and historians voted on the most influential work of modern art. They selected a toilet. Not surprisingly, Marcel Duchamp's "Fountain" (1917)—the toilet—hasn't always received such acclaim: the artwork was originally scorned by critics and turned down by the Independents Exhibition in New York. Duchamp's taste for anti-art, works that expose contradictions in art, is echoed in Pop Art's appropriation of commercial objects. Like Duchamp's toilet, Pop Art pushed the boundaries of acceptable subjects for works of art. In this push, the Pop Art movement of the 1960's met similar initial criticism.

The musical genre mash-up now faces this same negative response—and like Pop Art, mash-ups have pushed the boundaries of acceptable sources of musical material to be used in sampling. Exemplified by 2 Many DJ's mix-CD, As Heard on Radio Soulwax Vol. 2, mash-up tracks are created by pairing two disparate pop songs. While many deem it a fad, there have been a few snatches of reluctant praise and curious fascination. Some have even gone so far as to call mash-up the first new musical genre of the 21st century. Like Pop Art's playful subversions in the art world, mash-up forces reevaluation of the music industry's relationship to technology, business, and culture.

Pop Art and Psychological Lightness

op Art rose to prominence in the early '60s. Amidst the increasingly abstract and subjective American art of the '50s, Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art appeared as banal and surface-level as an advertisement. Oftentimes, especially with Andy Warhol's work, Pop Art actually was an advertisement for a mass-culture product. This distinct style stood in stark contrast to the Abstract Expressionist hegemony. Jackson Pollock, the iconic Abstract Expressionist painter, pioneered a painting style called "action painting," which emphasized the physical act of painting itself, with trimmings of splatter-paint as its hallmark. Pop Art, in contrast, was better known for completely removing the hand of the artist and using silk-screening to make "paintings." The rejection of Pollock and later Abstract Expressionist painters was significant, because they were part of the first American art movement to gain worldwide acceptance as cutting edge.

Along with Time Magazine's cover story on "Jack the Dripper" in 1956, Norman Rockwell immortalized Pollock in 1962 with a Saturday Evening Post cover called "The Connoisseur," which depicted a businessman staring at a splatter-painting. Because the businessman has his back to the viewer, his gaze reveals nothing, and the viewer must formulate his

own reaction to Rockwell's painting and the Abstract Expressionist aesthetic. By blankly commenting on taste and Abstract Expressionism, Rockwell created a work previously taboo in the art world, a work whose meaning depended on other artwork. His "Connoisseur" isn't autonomous; the work creates a dialogue between the Saturday Evening Post's middle-America and splatter-paint's high art. This playful relationship between mass and high art linked Rockwell to the Pop Artists and touched upon an emerging mode of expression.

In contrast to the overtly subjective role of the painter in Abstract Expressionist works, Pop Artists removed explicit subjectivity from their work by directly reproducing icons originally found in comics and advertisements. Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein, the leaders of the Pop Art movement, quoted the lowest art: pulp art. The shift cannot be overstated: Abstract Expressionism was part of Van Gogh's modern art lineage—a lineage that used subjectivity to form each artist's distinct individuality. Pop Art questioned this individuality by displacing comics and industrial ads into the gallery and museum culture. What individuality or subjectivity comes across in Warhol's famous silk-screened prints of Campbell's Soup cans?

It was this loss of abstracted individuality and new identification with mass-market iconography that critic Allan Kaprow noted when he described Pop Art as having "a pervasive surface character of psychological lightness." Kaprow's lightness refers to the movement's use of familiar symbols of mass culture—symbols that would not require interpretation by the viewer.

Mash-up Karaoke

his description could just as easily describe the mash-up genre. Unlike DJ or remix culture, which values turn-tabling skills and the collector's search for rare albums—a desire that has artists ironing off labels to make sure no other DJs find the same record—mash-up artists value neither innovative technique nor obscure source material. The genre's bleary-eyed imbibing of pop music is intentional: like Warhol, who made "paintings" with silk screening and utilized recognizable images, mash-up disregards ground-breaking technique and opts for a veritable "clash of the pop titans."

Because mash-up wasn't innovative compared to improvisational turntabling or other sonically robust dance genres (like jungle or drum and bass), its public reception as a mindless fad was predictable. Like the pop songs they plundered, mash-ups were considered yet another widespread form of mindless pop

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music ephemera. The genre follows a strict recipe—plug in song I, plug in song 2, and blend until eccentric and catchy—which undercuts the role of musical workmanship traditionally associated with fine music. Criticism has even come from "mashers" themselves: one of the original artists, DJ Z-Trip, called mash-ups "the new karaoke," implying that the genre is comprised mostly of amateurs who, in essence, sing other people's songs off-key. A pseudonym for the genre, "bastard pop," also exemplifies the lack of respect for the authors of this music (father-less music).

But is such a judgment warranted? Pop Art's rise to art-world stardom suggests something different: though Pop Art received a cool initial reception in part because of its unusual use of comics and industrial art, over time the movement grew to be one of the most respected and revered of the past 40 years. Quoting material from disdained mass media links Pop Art and mash-up—and perhaps this is reason to avoid dismissing mash-ups as mere novelty, karaoke, or fad. Just as Pop Art's use of quotation and massculture images proved to be an influential comment about commercialism in the '60s, so mash-up's use of quotation and pastiche serves not only as an interesting observation of commerce in the present music industry, but also of the role of pop music iconography and the effects of technology on music.

"Pop Art and Mash-ups"

op Art uprooted the familiar use of quotation. Traditionally quotation was employed to pay homage to the original author, to comment on the original author, or to clarify the meaning of a new work. Artists used quotation to similar ends, as in Édouard Manet's Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe (1862-63), which quoted an allegorical painting (The Pastoral Concert by Titian in 1511) and removed mythological motivation, leaving two nude women and a pair of dressed men having a picnic. Such techniques were used throughout the first half of the 20th century, and often meant that high art quoted high art in order to distinguish itself from emergent mass-produced images. Abstraction was promoted by modernist art critics like the eminent Clement Greenberg, who held that abstract painting was "a purer, more quintessential form of pictorial art than the representational kind." Warhol and Lichtenstein rebelled against this by directly quoting representational mass art in their earliest Pop Art works (Warhol's representations of celebrities like Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe, for example). The pair blurred the distinction between mass art and high art, subverting high art's attempt at distinction. Many critics misunderstood their use of

quotation: some commented, for example, that Lichtenstein's liberal quotation of comics was meant only to appeal to the base interests of comics fans, when in fact he was both legitimizing comics as an art form and questioning which subjects were "appropriate" for quotation in high art. Critics' traditional interpretation of the role of quotation led them to misinterpret Lichtenstein's revisionist attempts.

Mash-up's use of musical samples resembles Pop Art's use of quotation in art. To sample is to use snippets from actual recorded work, analogous to visual art's collage techniques. The technique has traditionally been used subtly, by including brief sounds to enhance a song: funk drum breakdowns in hip-hop songs, orchestral snippets in sampledelica (a genre christened by DJ Shadow or The Avalanches that gorges on disparate mini-samples). Mash-up, in contrast, quotes transparently, blatantly using large sections of recognizable songs at face-value.

Rather than incorporate mere glimpses of past compositions, artists like Freelance Hellraiser, Richard X and DJ Z-Trip shape entire pop songs into new hybrids. Perhaps the best example is found in the first wave of mash-ups, which included Freelance Hellraiser's 2001 success "Stroke of Genie-us"-Christina Aguilera's sultry dance-pop vocals placed over the anxious rhythms of the Strokes' garage-rock. This song uses sampling less as an homage to the original artists than as a way to re-think distinctions between pop artists and genres. Like Pop Art, these songs force a reevaluation of the concept of ownership, in this case of pop music. Although it's easy to dismiss these songs as derivative, they can also be both charming and unnerving. Music critic Tom Ewing put it best when he wrote on his Freaky Trigger website, "you're not listening to 'A Stroke Of Genius' as two tracks any more—you're listening to it as a great, lost but somehow hyper-modern girl-group or Blondie record, and the way the 'ooh ooh ooh's fit over the alcopop guitars tells you as much about desire and anxiety as any record you've ever heard."

Piracy Funds Terrorism

Tarhol once proposed that "making money is art, and working is art, and good business is the best art." Pop music, in which bighooks are practically accompanied by the sound of a cash register, certainly fits this philosophy. Pop music has been the most aggressively targeted material for copyright infringement.

Because of mash-up's reliance on explicit sampling, the genre implicitly comments on copyright laws. Even the first mash-up, the genre's genesis,

confronted this issue. Negativland's 1991 song "U2" was a parody composed of a U2 song, American Top 40 icon Casey Kasem's disparaging comments about U2, and a bizarre CB radio conversation. The group was immediately sued by Island Records, U2's label. The label stood to recoup \$70,000, an amount that Negativland had yet to earn in II years of recording. Negativland quickly settled out of court, but to this day they are advocates for broadening the copyright concept of "fair use." They describe copyright as an anomaly in law, "assuming that all unauthorized uses are illegal until proven innocent, and any contested 'fair use' always requires a legal defense." Pushing the boundaries of copyright has placed mash-ups in a legal grey area that, with the advent of home music editing software and the continuing uproar over music sharing, is more and more visible. This is not lost on the musical duo MIA and Diplo, who had their tongues firmly in cheek when they named their mashup mixtape Piracy Funds Terrorism.

Previous samplers minimized this conflict by camouflaging samples in an attempt to avoid the process of clearance (notifying and gaining permission to use a sample of an artist's earlier work). In July 2002 DJ Shadow told Remix Magazine that he gravitates "toward records that I feel are obscure, because I know if I sample it and can't clear it for whatever reason or don't want to clear it, then hopefully the odds are in my favor that it's not gonna be heard. But even employing obscure samples in musical collages has recently been deemed illegal by the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati. The ruling found that artists must pay not only for large samples of another artist's work, but also for barely recognizable snippets such as chords or beats.

In this environment, mash-ups have completely disregarded clearance. Instead of trying to get away with sampling, the genre's distribution circumvents typical routes, often appearing only in DJ sets or on the Internet or as limited white-label vinyl pressings. One important distribution mechanism for mashups is discussion boards. One such board, Get Your Bootleg On (http://gybo.proboards4.com), has over 12,000 threads of bootlegs. The site provides not only access to and distribution of mash-ups, but also a subculture hub that gives immediate feedback. Such locations are part of mash-up's cultural autonomy from the music industry. This autonomy avoids monetary commerce as a symbol of worth, instead opting for popularity and community response as measures of success. This shift positions the genre where musicians may gain very little economically but can nonetheless have a significant cultural impact.



The Future of Mash-ups

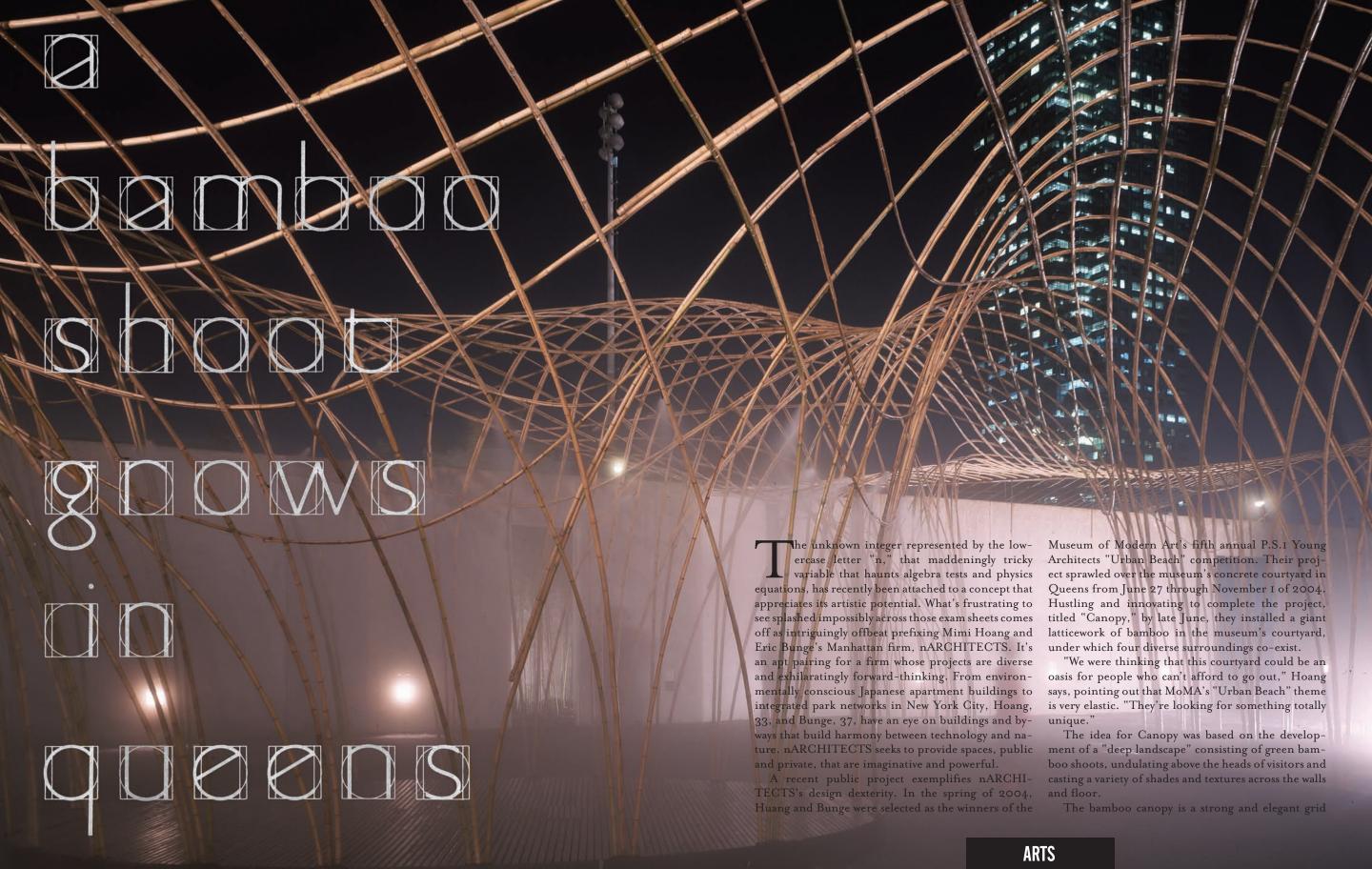
s mash-ups have entered mainstream culture, the original mash-up musicians have desert-Led the genre: quintessential mash-up group Soulwax returned to producing 'original' material, and DJ Z-Trip now thoroughly denounces mash-ups. In comparing traditional DJ culture to mash-ups, he told San Francisco Weekly in May, 2004, it is like "the difference between going to New York and getting a slice of pizza or going to the frozen food section in a store and getting a pizza." In their place, however, a new crop of artists—with established musicians like Kylie Minogue performing a mash-up of one of her songs and David Bowie sponsoring a mash-up contest—have used mash-ups to create new meanings and associations. Some have even directly argued for co." Using mash-up as a love letter to critically mamash-up's legitimacy beyond fad.

Originally broadcast on XFM, Strictly Kev's Raid-

ing the 20th Century is a superchunk (a mash-up set) comprised of mash-ups, interviews with prominent intellectuals, and avant-garde sound experiments. While the mix gives as much legitimacy to songs like Beyonce's "Crazy in Love" (paired with a big band production) as to Howard Zinn's reflections on 20th century events, Strictly Kev's association of mash-ups and high-culture (his comparing it to William Burrough's "literary cut-ins," for example) reevaluates mash-up's precedents and its worth.

Jason Forrest's recent album, The Unrelenting Songs of the 1979 Post Disco Crash, also furthers the legitimization of mash-ups. Blending music genres that have fallen out of favor with the public like disco and hair-rock, Forrest has created a self-described "cock-rock disligned genres, Forrest gleefully intersperses Credence

CONTINUED ON PAGE 70



which flows, dips, curves, and stretches like the fibers of tendon or ligament. As the sun crosses the sky, the crosshatches and diamond patterns shadow across the concrete floor. "The bamboo evolved out of an interest in landscape," Hoang says. "We wanted a less controlled, but geometrically precise space."

Under the draping canopy sat the four separate environments. The main room, called the Pool Pad, was the largest of the pods. In the center sat a lightcolored wooden deck that contained a wading pool. The canopy here swooped in from its roof-like position and fell downward so that it connected with the outside ridge of the deck in an unbroken ring. Inside this bamboo lattice, open to the sky, were the deck and pool. During DJ parties over the summer, the space provided ample room for the rollicking crowd.

Small nozzles emitted a cooling spray—also popular with dancers-in the Fog Room, and in the Rainforest Room, lawn sprinklers doused surprised visitors every half-hour. Guests around the Sand Hump's ellipse were exposed to both sun and shade. Two more rooms, a rock pad and a room called "Meeting Place," were added during construction to help support the canopy of 30,800 linear feet of green bamboo. The rooms offered a range of humidity differences, stretching from 5 percent in the Sand Hump to 100 percent in the Rainforest Room.

Bound with 37,000 feet of stainless steel wire, most of the bamboo gradually turned from green to brown over the summer, while shoots in the Rainforest Room were kept watered and green. The grace and scale of the project led Terence Riley, chief curator of architecture at MoMA, to call it "extravagant in form and light in conception."

But as Hoang suggests, their primary concern was providing a space that would be accessible to all—a truly functional urban escape for New Yorkers. "There's not a lot of public spaces that are easy to get to," she says, pointing out the practical difficulties of taking the subway or the bus to the beach. Hoang says they wanted to create a dynamic space with a variety of tactile and atmospheric experiences, like an organic playground.

"We wanted something that would work for a small crowd as well as a large crowd," she explains, something that wouldn't "get lost" among visitors, of which the project had plenty.

Every Saturday, "Warm Up," MoMA's acclaimed summer music series, drew thousands into the Pool Room to dance to an assortment of turntable artists such as Peanut Butter Wolf, Trevor Jackson, and Madlib, spinning from the museum's entrance. If anyone got too hot, Hoang remembers, they'd run to the Rainforest or Fog Room to cool off.

nARCHITECTS' ideas reach outside the concrete walls of MoMA's courtyard, however. Hoang would like to see is an increase in public space, and the inclusion of architects in public housing and development projects. Hoang believes that when housing developers skimp on design, communities wind up with projects she flatly labels "disastrous." Developers bent on maximizing profits (and floor space) are critically short-sighted when it comes to heat and energy-saving techniques, not to mention street-level architecture.

"Our interest," she says, "is to bring green architecture to contemporary design agenda, which is influencing the environmental concerns."

In a city like New York, which she labels both "pragmatic and idealistic," projects for young architects are hard to come by. "Just to make ends meet is extremely expensive," she says. "Commissions are always being done based on experience, and I think young architects should be given more of a chance."

Despite her obvious affection for the Big Apple's "incredible energy," to her, a city like Barcelona is an example of architectural progress.

Some of this can be attributed to what she calls "the Bilbao effect," in reference to architect Frank Gehry's Guggenheim museum. "Many provinces in Spain are following in the footsteps of Bilbao, creating their own cultural centers and exhibition spaces." She mentions Chicago's Millennium Park as another shining example of revitalizing a public space with the individual to make their own connections." high-quality design concepts.

"We have an interest in taking organic materials that are not architectural, and making them precise and functional," she explains. One of the goals of nARCHITECTS is the exploration of building types through challenging the methods and materials used to build them.

For Hoang, good architecture demands an outwardly visible integrity of design—something evident in the projects of the architects she admires in Spain and Chicago, and nARCHITECTS' work is certainly

being noticed. In 2001, Hoang & Bunge were awarded the Architectural League of New York's Young Architects Forum Prize. They won a fellowship to the New York Foundation for the Arts a year later. The Rhode Island School of Design recently hosted "Open Closet," an innovative hanging exhibit of recent works. They designed the exhibit, eager to avoid the typical "seeing your work on the wall" presentation.

"We wanted to exhibit it in a non-static way," Hoang explains. "Hypothetically you could turn around and look at it from different angles and unhook it, and put one project next to another, and look at the new relationships." Like their Canopy project in Queens, the emphasis rests on the individual's exploration and interaction with a space. Although Hoang says the connection was unconscious, she eloquently elaborates on the connection. "We try to keep things loose in terms of how people experience our work, be it large scale or small scale," she explains. "It's up to

Dedicated to quality design, and committed to the concept of individual personal interaction with architecture and design, Hoang tidily answers a particularly indulgent question: if a young architect with an eye on improving public space could create some, at the expense of one of New York's buildings, where would she direct the wrecking ball? After a quick, muffled consultation with her partner, Hoang reveals

"Anyone of Trump's," she says with a laugh. "Take your pick." **0**



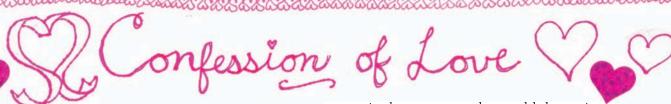
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 65

Clearwater Revival, Electric Light Orchestra, and The Who with disco rhythms, creating a concoction that re-evaluates earlier rock groups' styles against a distinctly anti-rock genre (disco).

Another member of this new wave of mash-up artists, DJ/rupture (Jace Clayton), connects strains of African and Arabic folk music to dancehall and even hip-hop/pop producer Timbaland. From his earlier work to the recently released Shotgun Wedding, DJ/rupture's music takes advantage of mash-up's use of persuasive associations to create a political dialogue. By recombining disparate strands of "black music" varied in locale but similar structure, DJ/rupture brilliantly undermines the categorization of world music, a process that marginalizes artists, labels and genres into undeserved obscurity. When DJ/rupture guotes artists like Miriam Mekeba, who lived through 30 years of exile from his native South Africa, he insists on making a political message "through the grooves

rather than extra-musical rhetoric," according to a February, 2000, City Pages piece.

In the works of Strictly Kev, Jason Forrest and DJ/ rupture, mash-up's use of quotation revives forgotten music, simultaneously elevating the role of pop music. Like Pop Art's employment of industrial ads and comic books, these artists' gleeful plundering of pop music reveals substance in what is normally considered ephemera, in music usually dismissed as a fleeting cultural object. Similar to Warhol's soup cans and Lichtenstein's comic fighter planes, a song like ccc's "Tax Jam Pollution" uses artists such as The Beatles, The Jam, and Beck to create an uncanny musical resonance and comment on copyright at the same time. "Tax Jam Pollution" displays how The Beatles' "Tax Man," The Jam's "Start!" and Beck's "New Pollution" all use the same bassline, tpointing out that current copyright law would make both The Jam and Beck's songs illegal. The power of these lost pop songs and their uses, when refracted in mash-ups, is totally disarming. •



Up in the Old Hotel, by Joseph Mitchell Vintage, 716 pp., \$16.00 (paper)

BY THOMAS BERENATO

73873

oseph Mitchell arrived in New York from North Carolina on October 25, 1929, the day after the stock market crashed. He was 21 and had moved to the city with the idea of becoming a political reporter. After nine years at the big dailies turning out sheaves of small, gemlike features, Mitchell joined the staff of The New Yorker. The profiles and sketches he filed there for the next three decades epitomize much of the magazine's contribution to American journalism and established him among the country's acutest urban chroniclers.

Mitchell had a gift for drawing torrents of talk from his subjects and capturing every word. But he was not just a listener of genius; he trawled the alleys for anonymous people worth hearing.

"I believe the most interesting human beings, so far as talk is concerned," Mitchell wrote, "are anthropologists, farmers, prostitutes, psychiatrists, and an occasional bartender. The best talk is artless, the talk of people trying to reassure or comfort themselves, women in the sun, grouped around baby carriages, talking about their weeks in the hospital or the way meat has gone up, or men in saloons, talking to combat the loneliness everyone feels."

Up in the Old Hotel collects all of Mitchell's New Yorker articles. His own favorite of these, "Mr. Hunter's Grave," is a study of the memory of an old Staten Island widower whose past has faded piecemeal around him. Mitchell shows here that the most powerful impressions a writer can leave are those that the reader must form for himself after facing the facts. While Mitchell often indulges a peculiar sense of irony (he calls it "graveyard humor"), he never stoops to satire, brandishes a moral, or forces a psychological connection. Instead he hoards a treasure of detail-each quotation a pearl perfectly set—and then offers it up with a gracious gesture. "Mr. Hunter's Grave" is an adagio that sinks into the reader without any insistence, the mark of a story that will survive its immedi-

The true story, Walter Benjamin writes, "does not expend itself," but "resembles the seeds of grain which have lain for centuries in the chambers of the pyramids shut up air-tight and have retained their germinative power to this day." Mitchell is a true storyteller, and we are still reaping all he has sown.

rven without consulting professional studies deprecation and even apathy have all helped up

Lor monitored polls, it seems safe to say that middle school is an inherently horrendous time to be alive. You're ugly, awkward, inexperienced, and chances are you've got those clear braces that don't fool anyone. Even the orange and black rubber bands in October don't help your case.

Has much changed since our tween years, or have the politics of cool just become infinitely more complicated? Irony, campy nostalgia, self-

the ante. But no matter how the variables change over time, the desire to be cool is a phase we never outgrow. The evidence: guilty pleasures. Many use kitsch as shield, but just admit it: even you have a trend susceptible skeleton in your closet.

Never mind image! Screw the sarcasm! If you participate in any of the following seven "indulgences" be proud to know that you are in good company (according to an informal survey).

Publications Where Images Outweigh Words

What's wrong with having an attention span that can barely get though a caption? Chances are you've skipped the introduction and have gone straight to this bold-faced list. Who cares about Rumsfeld when the world's fattest cat is on the loose, or Jennifer and Brad are separated? Seriously. Who?

Eavesdropping

And then repeating the story to others as though it was told in conversation. When friends ask probing questions, pretend as though you didn't hear them.

Digital Stalking

Including but not limited to incessant away message/ profile monitoring, Friendster, Thefacebook (more recently, the creation of Facebook groups) and, of Disney Channel Programming Circa 2001 course, the old-fashioned, DIY route: googling. Otherwise known as television geared toward a Maybe you'll strike gold with a link to a personal blog. demographic about six years your minor. God

Traditional Stalking

Bless Zoog Disney, or more specifically Zenon Girl of the 21st Century and Zenon the Zequal. And although it's now off the air, "The Torkelson's" and "Fast Forward" were just too hard to turn off.

Power Ballads and Electroclash

Unbridled pop: nothing more, nothing less, If Brittney is cocaine, these genres are crack.

Online Activism

Fierce message board debates with strangers, Amazon.com personal playlists, and webpage-based tournaments that tie into your favorite TV series. Perhaps you've even signed a petition to release a Torkelson's DVD box set? Just don't say you're too cool.

BY ERICA GOROCHOW



We had a lot of help. More than 40 people worked directly on The Passenger in more than 15 countries. As of press time, Passenger groups on 25 college campuses have agreed to promote our launch and distribute the magazine.

The Passenger is still a growing organization. There is plenty of room for new people and ideas. If you're

Tokyo skyline.

The image was created by Nick Ditmore. If you want observe this constellation for yourself, take the elevator to the 52nd floor of the Mori Building in Roppongi Hills. Go to the west-facing windows and stand on your head.

—The Passenger Team

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